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THE CAT

IN

HISTORY, LEGEND, AND ART

THE CAT

IN

HISTORY, LEGEND, AND ART

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED

BY

ANNE MARKS

LONDON: ELLIOT STOCK

61 & 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

MCMIX

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TO

MY DEAR FATHER

AND TO THE

MEMORY OF MY DEAR MOTHER

I LOVINGLY DEDICATE THE

FOLLOWING PAGES.

PREFACE

THE Author desires to express her thanks to Dr. E. A. T. Wallis Budge, M.A., Litt.D., D.Lit., Keeper of the Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities, British Museum, for permission to use extracts from his publications, "The Book of the Dead: Papyrus of Ani" and "Facsimiles of the Papyrus of Hunefer"; to Professor W. M. Flinders Petrie, D.C.L., F.R.S., for the use of photographs taken by him in Italian museums, and to him and the College for access to objects in the Egyptology Museum, University College, London; to the Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing-Cards for permission to copy various cards on which the cat is figured, and for the facilities granted by the representative of the Company, and by the officials of the Guildhall Library of the Corporation of the City of London; similarly to the different departments of the British Museum. Her thanks are also rendered to her brother, Mr. Percy L. Marks, and to Mr. B. T. Batsford, the publisher of his book, "The Principles of Planning", for permission to use the "Plan of Cattery" appearing in the second edition of that work. The Author trusts that all publishers and authors to whom she is indebted for various old tales, legends, superstitions, etc., will accept her grateful thanks.

ANNE MARKS.

10, MATHESON ROAD,
WEST KENSINGTON, W.
September, 1909.

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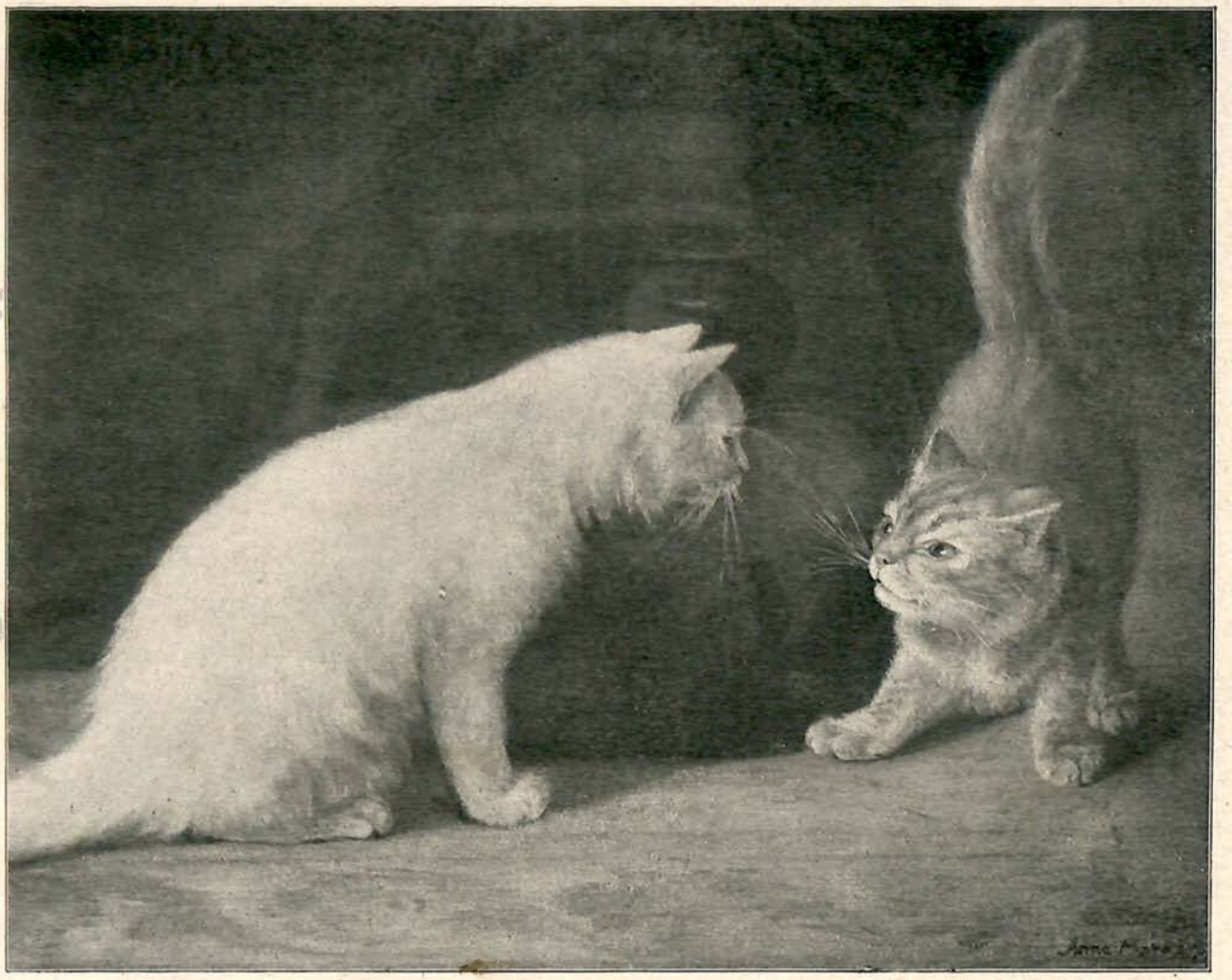

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AN INTRUDER.

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THE CAT IN HISTORY

"A MISCELLANY."

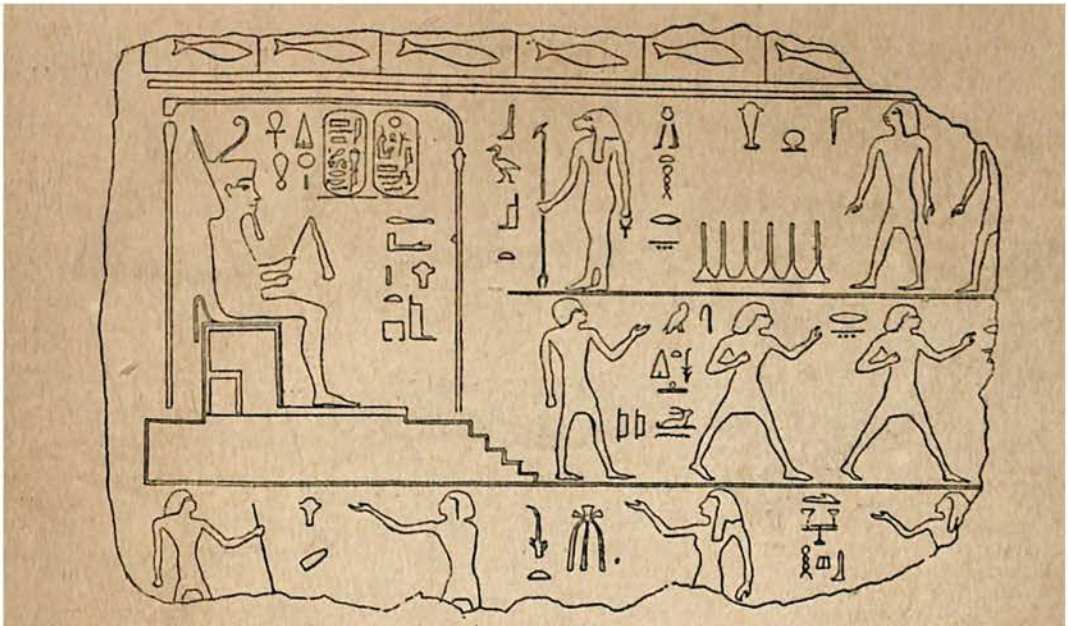


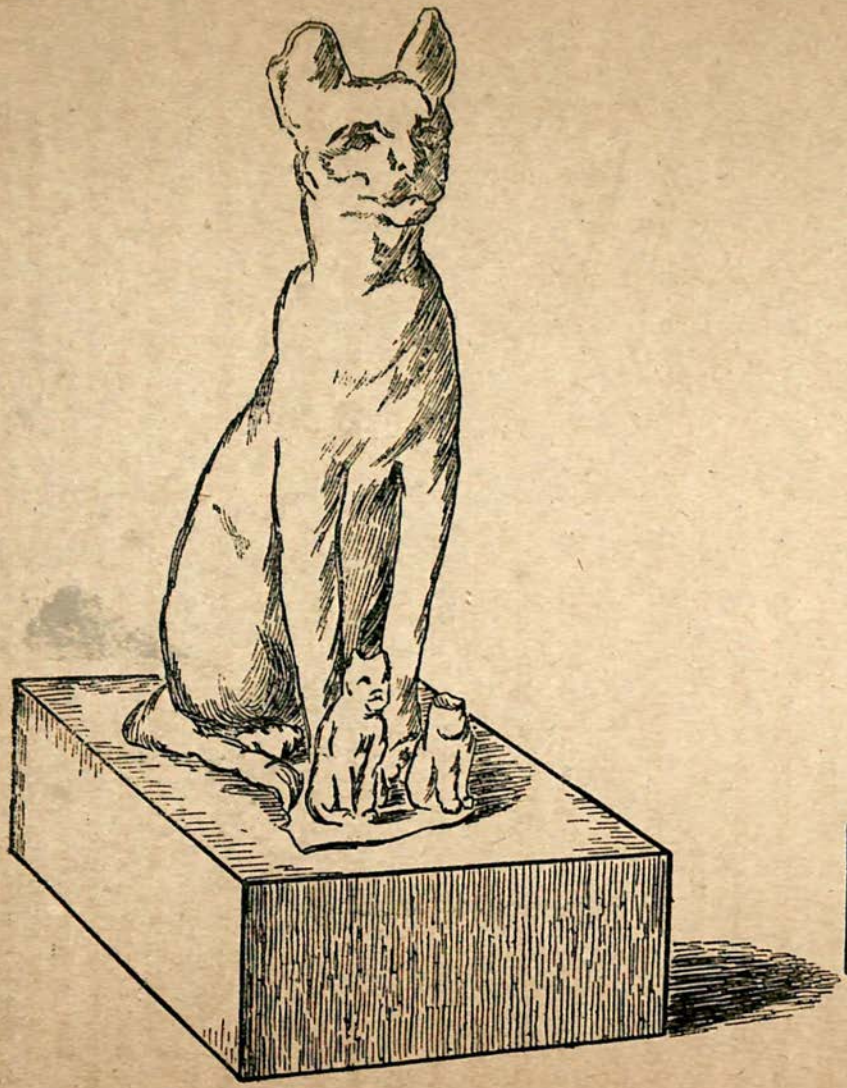
FIG. 1.

CHAPTER I

THE CAT IN HISTORY

ALTHOUGH at the present time the cat undoubtedly occupies a fairly important position, it is equally true that no other animal has experienced more varied changes in the estimation of mankind. The cat is now pampered and petted, exhibited, painted, and caricatured; it is provided with its own Burke and Debrett, and has its Clubs and shows, its boarding-establishments and hospitals. This happy state has succeeded to a period of suspicion and ill-treatment, the latter having followed still earlier ages, when puss flourished—an object frequently of reverent homage.

The history of this animal dates back to the time of the ancient Egyptians, when it was considered sacred, had its special goddess, and towns consecrated to its service, when it was sculptured and painted, and at death embalmed.



CAT AND KITTENS, SACRED TO THE GODDESS BAST.

PASHT.

From a bronze cat-headed figure (British Museum).

The Cat in History, Legend, and Art

If we turn to ancient history, we find the cat-goddess of the Egyptians a deity that had many names. Under that of Sekhet* she is shown with the head of the lioness, but there are innumerable representations of the cat-headed goddess Bast* and of the cat as an emblem of Bast, the difference being that the goddess has the *animal's* head with the *human* figure, whilst the cat as an emblem of Bast is of course the beast itself (see Plate III.), and it is sometimes seen resting on a pedestal made in the form of the hieroglyph signifying Bast. The image was worn as a charm (Fig. 2), and children who were dedicated to the service of Bast wore a medal with the impression of the animal. The sale of these medals was a source of considerable revenue to the priests of the cult. Greek historians assert that every Egyptian temple had its feline pets.

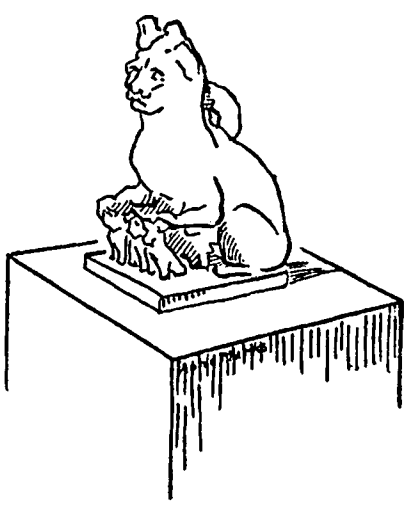


FIG. 2.

In Egypt the cat was held to be spiritually akin to both the Sun and the Moon, the male being more generally associated with the former and the female with the latter. As an instance of the animal's relation to the Sun, it may be noted that Thebes means the City of the Sun, and there the cat was accounted sacred; this city was also a favourite burying-place for the animal. It is certain that in ancient Egypt the cat was an object of idolatry,† the "luminous-

* Pasht, Tefnut, and Menhi were other names by which the goddess Bast was known. Bast or Sekhet was daughter of the sun-god. She was the goddess of love and one of the deities of the underworld, where as Sekhet she held the position of judge. Bast is often represented holding the Right Symbolic Eye in her left hand.

† It must be understood that the word "idolatry" is not used in its usual signification, as it is now urged that the Egyptians worshipped only one God, and that their idols symbolized the various attributes of the Supreme Being.

eyed cat" being one of the most popular of the sacred animals; it was associated with the Sun, which was revered as an attribute of Divine power. According to some authorities, the animal was likewise worshipped in the temple of Heliopolis (the City of the Sun), because the size of the pupil of its eye was observed to vary with the height of the luminary above the horizon.

As an emblem of the Moon the female cat is figured on a musical instrument, the sistrum (a sort of timbrel) which, usually held in the hand of the goddess Bast (Fig. 3), symbolized the *harmony* of creation. Remembering this, does it not seem incongruous to speak of the discord of our cats' nocturnal concerts?

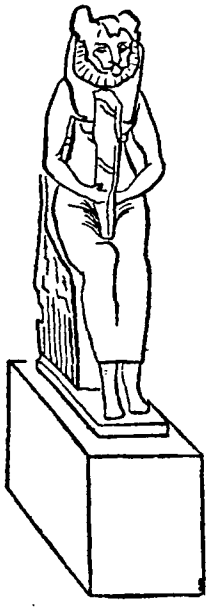


FIG. 3.

Another point of affinity between the luminary and the animal was found in the enlargement and fulness of the pupil of the eye, when the moon was full, and its contraction and diminished size when the planet was on the wane.* A still further point of similarity was found in the increased activity of both after nightfall. It is thought that the consecration of the cat and the divine honours paid to it by the people of Egypt were due to this belief in the variation of the size of its eye in sympathy with the phases of the moon. These sympathetic changes also gave rise to the impression that the animal was to a certain extent under

* This notion did not originate in Egypt—it is prehistoric. All the old writers give expression to this belief, although, according to the laws of light, the reverse effect would naturally take place, and the pupil of the eye would appear small in the brighter light of the full moon, and enlarged in the lesser amount of light given by the waning luminary. It may be, however, that the pupil of the cat's eye, showing merely a line in the day-time and increasing to a full roundness at night, forms the basis of this dubitable opinion. It is said that in Egypt the feline eye glows with supernatural brightness.

the influence of the luminary, and that therefore it was well to propitiate it.

In Suffolk it is believed that pussy's eyes dilate and contract with the ebb and flow of the tide; this would seem to have relationship to the old idea of the influence of the moon on the eye of the cat.

While on the subject of "cat-worship," Pliny relates that the Arabs revered a golden cat, and in much later times the Templars were accused of adoring what has been loosely styled "a certain cat."

The following appropriate lines from a translation from Juvenal may be quoted:

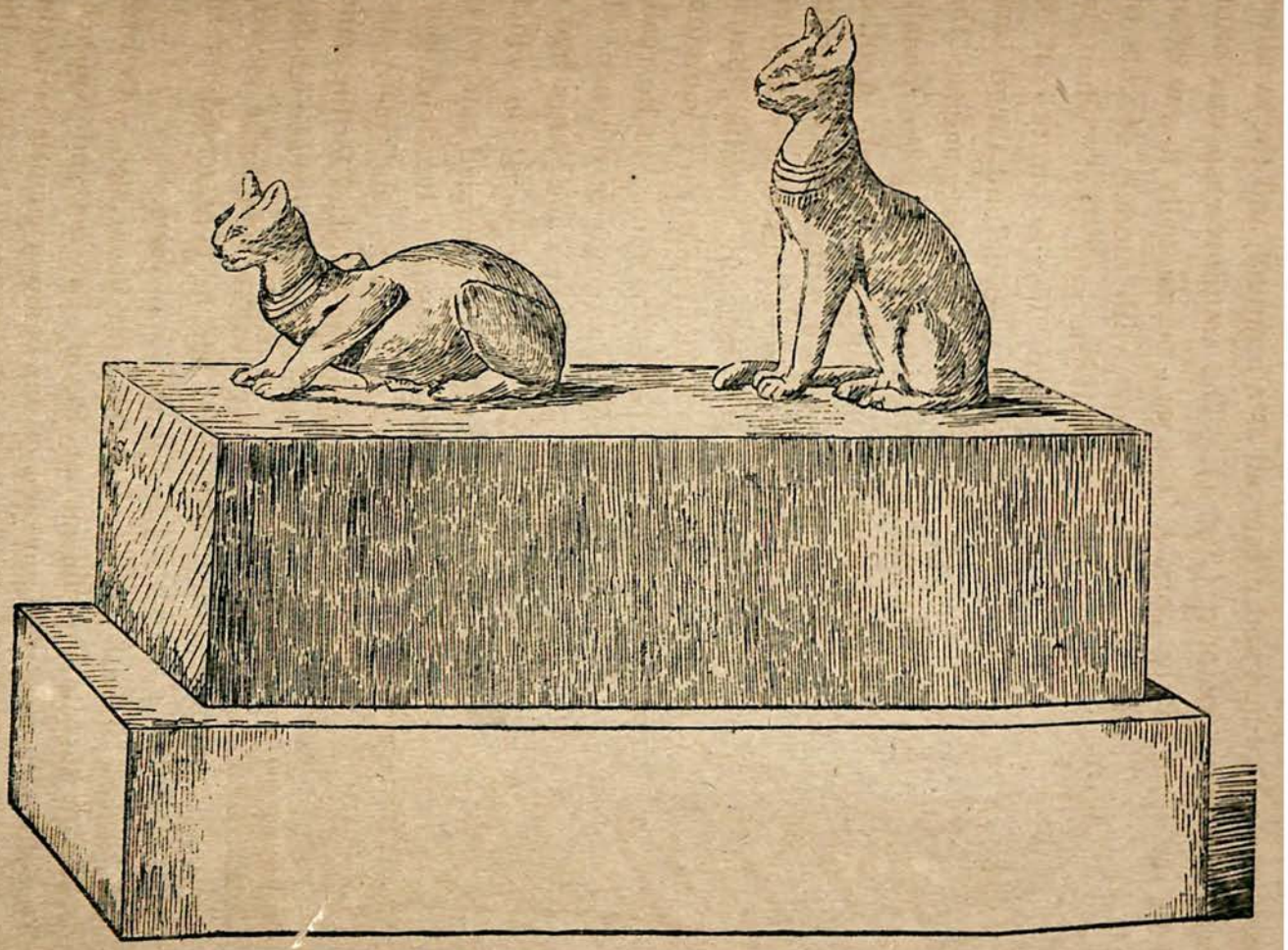
> "All know what monsters Egypt venerates;
> It worships crocodiles or it adores
> The snake-gorged ibis; and sacred ape
> Graven in gold is seen. . . . Whole cities pray
> To *cats* and fishes, or the dog invoke."

It is evident that amongst the ancient Egyptians the cat held a very enviable position, and its importance may be measured by the fact that, if a fire occurred in a house, puss was first to be saved, and when in the course of nature it died, the members of the household shaved their eyebrows as a sign of mourning. If anyone killed a cat, even by accident, the punishment was death, and there is an instance on record that the life of an unfortunate Roman was forfeited for a mishap of this kind, and that the intervention of King Ptolemy and the dread which Rome inspired were insufficient to prevent the infliction of the penalty. This fear of killing puss possibly gave rise to the anecdote of an easy victory gained by King Cambyses at Pelusium. He is said to have placed several cats in front of his army, and the enemy was consequently afraid to attack it. Certainly the veneration in which the animal was held in those bygone days was a sufficiently powerful guarantee for its protection.

In Egypt at that remote period, when a cat paid the debt of nature, it was embalmed and preserved as a mummy, and the swathed face was sometimes painted (Fig. 4). The mummy-case was often made in the form of the animal (Fig. 5); occasionally it was of an oblong shape with models of cats on the top. It is said that, when an Egyptian died, his favourite cat or kitten was sacrificed, embalmed, and placed in the same sarcophagus; this seems curious, considering the penalty exacted for killing the animal. Another strange assertion is that the Egyptians used the skins of cats to cover their shields; it is scarcely credible, but, if true, it is certain that they were unsuitable, being too flimsy to be really serviceable as a means of defence. It may be noted that a few years ago a large cave was discovered in which were thousands of mummied cats, many of which were used in the neighbouring fields as manure, and many too were exported to England for the same purpose, a most unexpected and ignoble end to animals long held to be sacred, and which had been preserved for so many hundreds of years.

FIG. 4.

The most ancient testimony of the cat's connection with man occurs in the old monuments of Egypt, Babylon and Nineveh. The earliest known representation of one of these animals is in the Necropolis of Thebes, and is four thousand years old. It is at the



BRONZE MUMMY CASE FOR A KITTEN.

tomb of King Hana, on the stele of which are the effigies of man and cat ; the animal (by name Bouhaki) has golden earrings hanging from its pierced ears. The representations of the cat were numerous in the Theban tombs, and models both in bronze and porcelain have been brought thence to England.

Fig. 5.

The city of Beni-Hassan was another favourite burying-place for cats.

It will be noticed that in the hieroglyphics the cat is described by drawing it, and inscriptions relating to the animal are found even as early as 1684 B.C. It has its place in the Ritual, and in vignettes in the "Books of the Dead" ; it is sometimes shown with its claws on a snake, and this combination is found in the written Rituals. In a copy of the Egyptian Ritual, dated 1500 B.C., a curious inconsistency appears

in the text, "Thou hast eaten the rats hateful to Rā [the sun], and thou feedest on the bones of the impure cat." A possible explanation

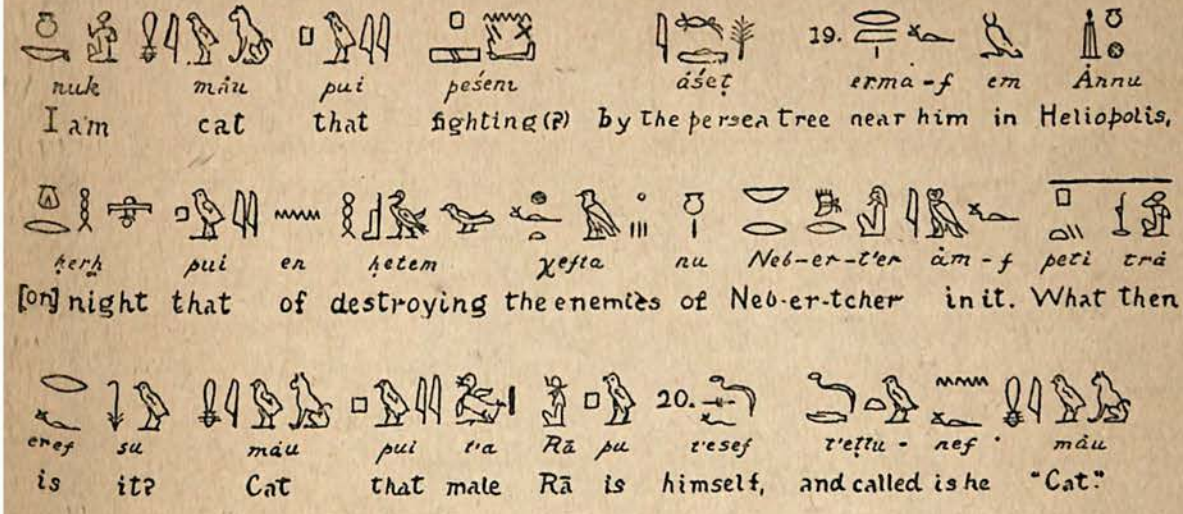

nuk mâu pui peśenṛ áśeṭ 19. ṛrma-f em Ânnu
I am cat that fighting (?) by the persea tree near him in Heliopolis,
ḥerḥ pui en ḥetem χeśta nu Neb-er-t'er âm-f peṭi trâ
[on] night that of destroying the enemies of Neb-er-tcher in it. What then
ereṛ su mâu pui t'a Rā pu t'esef 20. t'eṭṭu-ṛef mâu
is it? Cat that male Rā is himself, and called is he "Cat."

FIG. 6.

of this is that puss, who was accounted sacred in one city, might in another be regarded as impure, and that thus all cats were not held to be divine. The animal is also mentioned in the seventeenth chapter

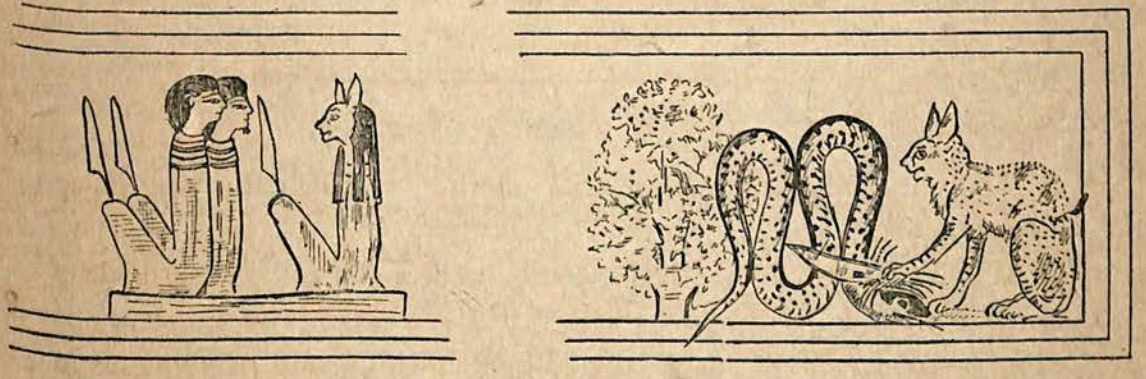


FIG. 7.

(of the Ritual), which is so frequently inscribed on the coffins of the eleventh dynasty, and this (according to Lepsius) carries us back to

about 2400 B.C. Amongst the vignettes in Dr. Wallis Budge's "Books of the Dead", in which cats or cat-headed gods are seen, is one which shows a tree, a serpent, and a cat with a knife. The explanation of this is that "a cat in front of a Persea-tree, cutting off the head of a serpent, symbolizes the slaying of the dragon of darkness by the rising sun-god Rā."

The hieroglyphic word for cat is *Maou*, an instance of onomatopœia. It is met with on an old tablet (about 1800 B.C.), "Maiu" or "cat" forming part of a woman's name, so that to associate "feline amenities" with feminine attributes is not without the sanction of a high antiquity; and, alas, for women and cats! it is hinted that in the hieroglyphics on some of these monuments the cat represents false friendship.

וְאָתָא שׁוּנְרָא · וְאָכְלָה לְגַדְיָא · דְּזַבִּין אַבָּא בִּתְרֵי זוּזֵי · חַד גַּדְיָא חַד גַּדְיָא:

And a cat came and devoured the kid, which my father bought for two suzim; one only kid, one only kid.

A verse from a poem to be found at the end of the סדר הגדה (service for the first nights of Passover). The poem is generally regarded as a parable descriptive of incidents in the history of the Jewish nation, etc.

FIG. 8.—HEBREW AND ENGLISH FROM PASSOVER SERVICE.

The cat was not domesticated amongst the ancient Hebrews; indeed, there is no mention of it in the Bible, though allusion is made to it in the Apocrypha, Baruch vi. 22: "Upon their bodies and heads sit bats, swallows, and birds, and the cats also."* However, there are occasional references to the animal in Hebrew writings of later date. One of these is at the end of the service which is recited at the inauguration of the Jewish festival of the Passover, and occurs in a poem of the nature of "The House that Jack Built", a parable allusive to incidents in the history of the Jewish nation: "And a cat came and devoured the kid", etc. The kid (a clean animal) represents the Hebrew people, and the cat is understood

* The original of this verse is from the Greek Bible of Angelus Maius (Epistle of Jeremy, i. 21), and runs as follows:

Ἐπὶ τὸ σῶμα αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν ἐφίπτανται νυκτερίδες, χελειδόνες καὶ τὰ ὄρνεα, ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ οἱ αἴλουροι.

to be typical of Babylon. The Talmud says that a cat never quits the house that it has made its home, and this suggests its domestication amongst the Jews at this later epoch of their history.

In India the cat was held in high esteem, and was known two thousand years ago. In the fairy-tales of that country puss is described as being clever and cunning, and always triumphing over her enemies. Sanskrit writings of a still earlier period refer to the animal.

In tracing the history of the cat through the variations of fortune which the animal has experienced in more recent times, it will be observed that fact is still so mingled with legend and superstition that it is impossible to separate the several component parts of the *ensemble* from each other; but it will, it is to be hoped, also be observed that as far as possible a methodized plan has been followed in this and the succeeding chapters.

The punishment of death which the ancient Egyptians inflicted for the killing of a cat was modified at a later period, when in England and Wales, in Switzerland, Saxony, and other European countries a penalty of lesser severity (yet, doubtless, sufficiently heavy to be an effective protection to the animal) was imposed upon the slayer.*

In Persia, where we might reasonably expect that some of the most beautiful cats would be found, long-furred specimens are now very seldom seen, and a Londoner finding himself in that country might fancy that the lean and half-starved Metropolitan strays had followed him on his travels. The occasional passable specimens that are to be seen, especially if they are white, are bought for a small sum by horse-dealers and taken to India, where they are readily purchased.

The best cats of Persia—which are very unlike what we understand by Persian cats—are called "Van", have odd-coloured eyes, and, if

* The penalty inflicted during the Middle Ages was the forfeit of a ewe, or a heavy fine of as much wheat as would be required to cover the cat when it was held up by the tip of the tail with the nose touching the ground.

thoroughbred, are deaf. They do not bear a high character, as it is said that they are in every way objectionable; indeed, the people have no respect for the cat, and there is not much trace of the influence of the animal in the art of the country. Some examples, however, occur, such as bottles made in its shape. We find similar ware of Delft manufacture (Plate V.).

The cat was very popular among the Arabs, who believed that their fairies (the Jinns) took the feline and other animal forms. In the feline shape they haunted dwellings, and extravagant tales are associated with the subject. It is stated that every caravan of pilgrims is accompanied by a man on a camel. He is called the Father of the cats, and has with him nine to a dozen of these animals, some on his lap and the rest in baskets slung by the side of his steed. Up to a recent period it was a woman, who with several cats accompanied each caravan of pilgrims journeying to Mecca, the custom being, it is believed, a survival of the carrying of cats to Bubastis.

In the East generally the animal is still very much esteemed—even honoured—and it is met with in Chinese and Japanese art and lore. In China, people tell the time of day by examining the eye of the cat, the pupil of which, as we know, becomes continually narrower until 12.0 (noon), when it has almost the appearance of a vertical line. After that hour the dilation recommences, so that in this manner we may imagine the time may be approximately known by an intelligent and experienced observer. The following appropriate anecdote, said to be quite true, is related of a missionary who, having gone out without his watch, asked a small boy the time of day. The child hesitated, and then replying: "I will tell you directly", disappeared. In a few moments he returned carrying a very large puss, and looking intently into its eyes said with decision: "It is nearly midday."

The Chinese make a national and dainty dish of the flesh of the cat, and in China and the extreme East enormous cats are seen

MUG IN THE FORM OF A CAT.

BOTTLE IN THE FORM OF A CAT.

hanging at the provision dealers' stalls. These animals, large and very like our own, are to be found chained in all the farms for the purpose of being fattened. In Spain, and other countries also, the people used to eat cats. The head and tail were removed, and the flesh hung in the open air to get rid of its strong flavour; after a day or two it was ready for eating, and was considered almost as sweet as rabbit.

In the Flowery Land (as in the Isle of Man) cats without tails are found, though all of these are not born without the appendage. In fact few countries can boast of so many varieties of the animal—cats without tails, cats with ordinary tails, and (mythical) cats with two tails. The kittens of Yedo are reputed to be bad mousers, in consequence, it is supposed, of excessive petting by their owners.

The Siamese dislike a white cat, and this is an inconsistency, as they greatly value white elephants and other white animals.

Cats were domesticated in Europe prior to the Christian Era, though they would appear not to have been widely known before the tenth century. The Etruscans and the inhabitants of Taranto in South Italy were the first Europeans to make use of the animal. It was imported from Egypt, and kept not only as a rare and petted favourite, but as a destroyer of mice. It is thought that the cat was about this time also introduced into Greece from Egypt, but, in spite of the assertion that it was quite a common animal among the Greeks at this period, there are very scant traces of it to be found in their art; it is, however, seen on some of the painted vases, and one of the few examples known is a bronze dagger engraved with the scene of a cat hunting ducks.

The Romans used the cat as an emblem of liberty, and during the French Revolution the animal was borne on the Republican shield of arms as a type of this same quality which held a supreme position in the aspirations of the French people at that time; but with the passing of the frenzied outburst the cat ceased to be of any importance in their

heraldry. The Dutch, who struggled so fiercely for their independence, appropriately chose this animal as their ensign, and the Burgundians also bore it on their banner as emblematical of the same principle.

On a fourth-century tomb of the Gallo-Roman period, now in the Museum of Antiquities at Bordeaux, there is a likeness of a girl holding a cat in her arms, with a cock at her feet; at that time the playthings and the domestic animal pets of children were buried with them. This custom was probably a survival of the Egyptian one of putting food, playthings, etc., in the tomb with the mummy. The idea was that, should the departed spirit revisit the body, it would find at hand familiar objects as well as refreshment.

Pope Gregory the Great, who lived towards the end of the sixth century, made a pet of his puss, but towards the period of the Lower Empire the position of the cat had become degraded, the minor poets of the age holding it in profound contempt and accusing it of all kinds of failings, including greed and dishonest propensities. Yet the artists in mosaic were in the habit of portraying it.

In Turkey, as in all Mohammedan countries, cats have always been the object of much solicitude, probably because of the extreme affection shown for them by the prophet Mahomet. They may even enter the mosques, where they meet with attention and caresses. At Constantinople they are treated with as much consideration as the children.

In Cairo there is an endowment for lodging and feeding homeless cats; this was founded in the thirteenth century by El-Daher-Beybars, the Sultan of Egypt and Syria, who was very much attached to these animals, and it is the first of similar institutions that now exist in London and other places in England, in Italy, and in Switzerland.

Referring to the Cairo home, or the garden Gheyt-el-Quottah

(the cats' orchard), it was originally adequately endowed, but from various causes the funds are now so reduced, that the food provided is insufficient for the pensioners. It is also narrated that there exist in Constantinople institutions supported by people of the highest quality, and having for their object the maintenance of cats that prefer

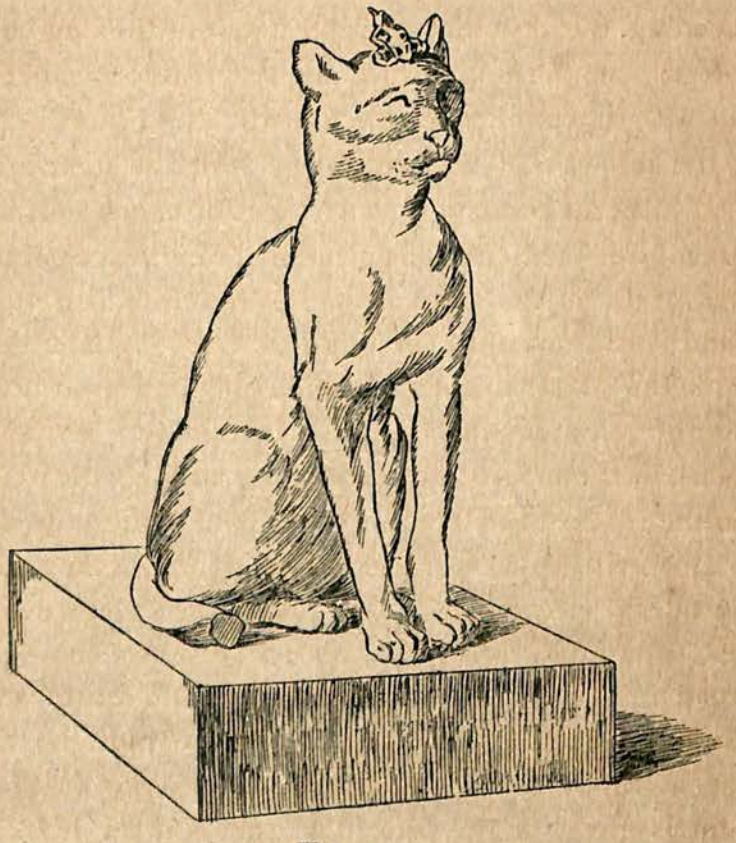


Fig. 9.

to live unattached. Open house is kept ; puss is kindly received, and may, if she desires, spend the night in the home. Moreover, she has a choice of such hospices, for a great many are to be found in nearly all the towns. Hence mistress puss need never revisit a home which does not satisfy her whimsies.

The Cat in History, Legend, and Art

In Florence there is a cloister near the Church of San Lorenzo which serves as a home for cats.

The cat was not domesticated in Gaul, and amongst the numerous small terra-cotta figures of animals made by the potters of Allier it is not included, but at a later period the representations of puss began to appear, and gradually became more numerous.

Succeeding the cruelties perpetrated on the animal during the Middle Ages, amongst the first signs of improvement in pussy's condition was the publication of an edict in Flanders in 1618 prohibiting the practice of throwing cats from the high tower of Ypres, which had hitherto been a customary performance on the Wednesday of the second week in Lent. The custom of flinging cats into the bonfires kindled at Metz on the festival of St. John (held on June 24) lasted longer, and it was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that the wife of the Marshal d'Armentières obtained from her husband an order for the suppression of this act of cruelty. For this ceremony, while it lasted, the magistrates used to assemble with much solemnity in the public square, and place a cage containing cats on a funeral-pile ; to this, with great parade, they set fire. The people believed that the frightful cries made by the poor beasts were evidence of the sufferings of an old sorceress, supposed long ago to have been transformed into a cat when she was about to be burned. On the other hand, even in the Middle Ages, puss could be an honoured personage at high festivals. In Mill's "History of the Crusades" an account is given of the fête of Corpus Christi, held at the town of Aix in Provence, in which the finest male cat of the district was selected to be wrapped in swaddling-clothes like a child, and was then placed in a magnificent shrine and exhibited to the public for their homage. This was evidently a survival of Egyptian adoration, for everyone knelt before the cat, strewing flowers or offering incense, and puss was held in every way to be the god of the festival.

At the time of the Norman Conquest laws were in force in Britain regulating the price to be paid for kittens. A kitten before the eyes were opened was worth one penny, afterwards just double the amount, and when ranked as a mouser it was valued at fourpence. By the same laws it was also decreed that a cat to be of full value should see, hear, have its claws, and be able to kill mice. In order that a mistake should not be made as to the animal referred to in these (and other) laws, a rough sketch of puss is added. These

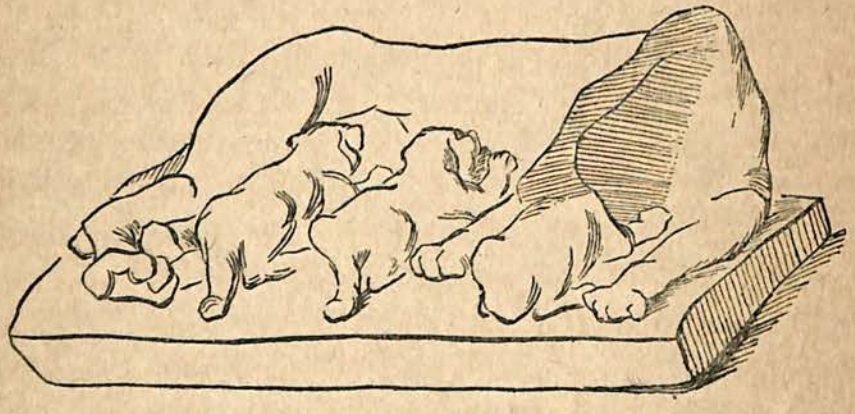


FIG. 10.—CAT SUCKLING KITTENS.

regulations indicate the value of the domestic breed in this country at the time, and are probably a proof that it was distinguished from the wild species at a period when the latter existed in large numbers. Early in the twelfth century a law was in force in England forbidding any abbess or nun to wear fur more costly than that of the lamb or cat (the latter fur being at that period commonly used for trimming dresses), but it seems uncertain whether this regulation applied to the fell of the domestic or the wild animal. By the way, it has been suggested that about this time the custom of keeping cats in nunneries originated the tradition which associates the animal with old maids.

Wild cats were an object of the chase, but, on the other hand,

they were also employed in the capacity of hounds, and were of sufficient importance to require an officer to take charge of them. This functionary was called a "Catatore", and his position was equal to that of the Master of the King's Hounds. In "The Scornful Lady", a play by Beaumont and Fletcher, an allusion to this employment of the animal is made in the line, "Bring out the cat-hounds; I'll make you take a tree."

There were different sports indulged in in Scotland and elsewhere in which puss was most cruelly treated. "Cat in Barrel"* and "Cat in Bottle"†—the latter referred to by Shakespeare, and in vogue long after his days—were two of these of a somewhat similar nature. "Catte in a Basket" was still another game, but in this the cats shot at were sometimes dummies, though on other occasions the animal itself was used.

M. Paul Mégnin relates that the domestic puss may occasionally be found engaged in catching fish. He writes of one that was surprisingly dexterous in taking gold-fish from a bowl; with a rapid movement of the paw the fish was quickly captured, and transferred from the water to the table. Apropos of this, Gray wrote a poem on the tragic death of a cat by drowning while trying to take gold-fish from a bowl. The author has had several kittens whose chief delight was to dabble with their paws in their dish of drinking-water. One was especially skilful in playing a game of repeatedly sending a ball or piece of paper into the saucer for the express purpose of fishing it out again.

* To the sound of music and the beating of drums, a cat was placed in a barrel that contained a quantity of soot; this was suspended from a cross-beam resting on two high poles. Those taking part in the sport rode in succession underneath the barrel, striking it with clubs and wooden hammers. When the barrel at last broke, and the cat was forced to appear, it was cruelly killed.

† In this sport a cat, enclosed in a bag or leather bottle, which was suspended from a tree, served as a target. The object was to break the bottom of the bag, and by agility to escape receiving a blow from the falling animal.

The Cat in History, Legend, and Art

Our Government allows a certain yearly sum for the maintenance of cats in our different shipping and other public offices, stores, etc.; the value of their services is thus amply acknowledged. The Vienna municipal authorities maintain several of the animals in like fashion.

Cats are of a loving nature, and delight in displaying it towards those whom they select for attention; they rub against them, or insist on being nursed, purring loudly and continuously the while. Frequently they exhibit a decidedly jealous tendency, and resent notice taken by their owners of other cats. Indeed, there is an anecdote told of one puss who, if displeased, marked her disapprobation by deliberately taking a distant seat and turning her back to the company.

Some say that St. Ives, the patron saint of lawyers, is depicted as accompanied by a cat, and that in consequence the animal is used as the emblem of the officials of Justice—very suitable, if we remember that a clause in law, like a cat's claws, may under a smooth exterior conceal a weapon sharp and formidable. It has also been said that cats are frequently involved in grave testamentary questions, and occupy the attention of the police and tribunals of civil law more than any other animal. As an example, if a merchant ship is without a cat on board, and the cargo has received injury from rats, the proprietor of the cargo can recover compensation from the owner of the vessel, although, in a general way, marine insurance does not cover injury by rats. On the other hand, if rats kill a cat, there is no redress—on the same basis that "a man who is killed by a woman is held to be no man."

An instance occurred some years ago, when a suit was heard which made a great sensation. A brother demanded "interdiction" against his sister, because "she had had a tooth of her deceased cat set in a ring", and he considered that this was an undeniable proof of insanity or imbecility. We are inclined to agree with him.

THE CAT IN MYTHOLOGY AND LEGEND

"To-morrow will be Friday."

CHAPTER II

THE CAT IN MYTHOLOGY AND LEGEND

FIG. 11.

THE cat is fabled to have appeared first at the time of the Deluge, when Noah, fearing the depredations of the mouse, prayed that the stores in the Ark might be protected. As an answer to the prayer the lion sneezed, and a pair of cats sprang out of his nostrils. The Manx, a tailless cat, claims as ancient a pedigree, for, when the Flood ceased, puss—so runs the legend—in her impatience to leave the Ark, jumped out of the window and had her tail snapped at by the dog, then, as now, her natural enemy. Puss escaped, but left her tail in the dog's mouth. How the Isle of Man was reached and became the home of this feline curiosity is not told.

There is a legend in Russia which is supposed to explain the antagonism that prevails between the cat and the dog, but it differs widely from the foregoing fable in some points. It tells us that, when the dog was created, and while he was waiting to receive his robe of fur, he lost patience, and followed the first-comer who called him. This happened to be the Devil, who made him his emissary, and sometimes even borrowed his appearance. The fur destined for the dog was given to the cat, and perhaps the former's belief that the other has appropriated what should have belonged to him may suffice to explain the antipathy that exists between the two animals.

Apropos of the association of the cat with the Ark, in an old Italian picture showing the departure of the animals from its shelter, a fine puss leads the way, evidently well satisfied with its prominent position. Moncrif relates another curious legend concerning the origin of the cat, which was imparted to him by Mulla, a minister of the Mussulman religion. It runs thus: "For the first few days of residence in the Ark each animal, frightened by the motion and by the strangeness of the surroundings, remained with its kind. The ape was the first to tire of the restricted life, and made advances to a young lioness, and it was from this 'amour' that the first pair of cats sprang." Greek mythology gives it a still different origin. Apollo, wishing to frighten his sister, created the lion; Diana, for the purpose of retaliating, and at the same time desiring to throw ridicule on the animal whom the god designed to call "king" of the beasts, created the cat.

The association of the cat with the moon is set forth in the mythologies of many nations. We have already treated of the cat in Egyptian mythology, which is so closely interwoven with the early history of the animal that it would be difficult to separate the two accounts. Among the Hindoos the word for "moon" is the same as that for a "white cat", and their quaint expression, "The cat-moon eats the grey mice of the night," is symbolic of the disappearance of clouds under the influence of the moon. In Sanskrit legend the huntress Diana—who is also the Moon, and identical with the goddess Bast of the Egyptians—took the feline form, when the gods fled from the giants. In this shape she was able to act as a spy, the cat being watchful and wary. Plutarch associates the luminary and the animal, because a cat was fabled to bear *one* kitten at the *first* birth, *two* at the *second*, *three* at the *third*, and so on until the seventh. She had then borne twenty-eight in all—*i.e.*, the same number as there are days in the lunar month. The following is an Australian myth which is supposed to have a connection with Mityan (the moon): A cat fell in love with a bride, and

in the consequent quarrel with the husband was beaten, and ran away —condemned to wander for ever. Another Australian legend tells us how certain animals solved the problem of kindling a fire, and in this legend the native cat tribe is mentioned (*vide* "Australian Legendary Tales", collected by Mrs. K. Langloh Parker). Nevertheless, some writers assert that the Australian region may be considered the typical *catless* portion of the world, and that the domestic breeds now found there are entirely the result of importation.

It must be understood that in legends of this class there is a distinction between the *white* and the *black* cat, the former being an emblem of the Moon and a protector of innocent animals, the latter a symbol of the dark—that is, the moonless—Night. Black cats are also associated with witches, and this superstition was very prevalent throughout the Middle Ages, and survived until comparatively recent days, during which period puss had usually a bad time.

In Northern mythology the cat figures somewhat prominently. That the chariot of the goddess Freya* was drawn by cats, and that Holda was attended by maidens riding on cats, indicated, it is said, a widespread belief in the animal's weatherwise powers. The wolf "Fenrir", a monster, is fabled to have been effectually bound with the chain "Gleipnir", which was, so runs the old story, composed of six materials, one of these being "the sound of a cat's footstep." In Teutonic mythology the cat is sacred to St. Gertrude, the goddess who protected departing souls; and in Sicily it was honoured as belonging to St. Martha.

A very old legend is told of the prophet Mahomet, who was a great lover of the cat. It is related that one day, his feline pet having fallen asleep whilst lying on the sleeve of his robe, he cut off that part of his

* Freya is the Venus of Scandinavian myth; she is also a form of Demeter, and her cats are said to be symbolic of sly fondling and sensual enjoyment. Bast is the Venus of Egyptian mythology.

dress when obliged to move, in preference to disturbing pussy's slumbers.

There is a similar modern anecdote given of a certain soldier in the East. He was observed to remain persistently in the scorching sun instead of seeking shade, because the movement would have disturbed a kitten that was sleeping on his lap.

An old Grecian fable relates that, when the mice were at war with the frogs, the former covered their cuirasses with cat's-skin.

It is difficult not to give credence to the usual acceptation of the legend of "Whittington and his cat." It is very well known, and need not be repeated here; but a second and very interesting, though less romantic, variant avers that his *cat* was not an animal, but a ship* that was used for carrying coal, in which traffic Sir Richard is said to have made his fortune by bringing coal in his *cat* from Newcastle to London. On the other hand, when Whittington's house was restored in recent years, a carved stone was found which showed the portrait of a boy holding a cat.

The following is a Russian rendering of the ancient tale from which the usual version of "Whittington and his cat" is supposed to have emanated, but probably both are derived from a Buddhist source, to which the incident of burning of incense points: A poor youth seeing a kitten being tormented, purchases it for three copecks, the only money he possesses. In order to earn his living, he engages to sit in a merchant's shop and mind the business, which thereupon prospers exceedingly. The merchant charters a vessel to go on a distant

* The "cat" was originally an old-fashioned Danish or Norwegian ship. It had a narrow stern, projecting quarters, and deep waist with rounded ends, and was flattened underneath; the masts were small and light, with square-cut sails. The last cat-built ship disappeared about fifty years ago. In addition to the ship, an anchor, and tackle for drawing up the same, were similarly named. Apropos, there used to be a joke: "Do you know when the Mouse [a certain sandbank in the Thames] caught the Cat?"

"TURNING THE TABLES."

A cat captured and tormented by rats.

voyage, and borrows the kitten both to catch the mice and to amuse himself. When the ship reaches its destination, and the owner is on shore, he is put in a bedroom infested with rats and mice, and puss protects him by destroying the vermin. The landlord purchases the kitten, giving in exchange as much gold as would cover it when held up by the fore-legs, the hind-legs resting on the ground. On the return journey the merchant thinks he will keep the money for himself, but a terrible storm bursts forth, which only ceases when he decides to give it to the rightful owner. With the gold the youth purchases a shipload of incense, and he burns it along the shore in honour of God. An old man now appears before the hero, and gives him the choice of riches or a good wife. Not knowing what answer to give, he is told to inquire of three brothers who are ploughing close by, and the advice is to choose a good wife. Thereupon a beautiful girl stands by his side, and tells him she will marry him. This tale, like so many of the old fairy legends, contains a warning against the sin of avarice. A variation of the story is related in Servia.

Puss also appears in the nursery tales of the Western Isles of Scotland, tales which, however, can be traced to Indian stories, these having been taken from Chinese books translated from Sanskrit manuscripts. It is, by the way, generally conceded that the nursery tales of most countries bear a strong resemblance to each other. This suggests their having had a common genesis.

Our Puss-in-boots has its equivalent in Russia and other countries, and the Swedish version is found in one of Thorpe's "Yuletide Stories"—namely, "The Palace that stood on Golden Pillars"; but in this latter tale the principal character is a princess whose cat performs the wonders that Puss-in-boots did for the Marquis of Carabas.

The legend is also met with in France, where it was translated from the Italian in the sixteenth century. The moral of the tale is that

" mother-wit is better than riches." Our Cinderella dispenses with puss, but another version of this fairy story is " Cat-skin ", and in it the heroine is clothed in a robe of the animal's fur, until her fortunes change with her marriage with the hero-prince. This tale is also of Oriental origin.

The fable of " The Cat and the Mouse " that appears in different countries is undoubtedly of Buddhistic origin, and is found in ancient Sanskrit, Indian, and Chinese books, the Indian rendering varying but slightly from the Chinese. The following versions of it will show the similarity between them.

The Indian tale relates that a man in joke hung a religious emblem round his cat's neck, but the mice took it as a sign of a devout disposition on pussy's part, and congratulating themselves, commenced enjoying life with easy minds. Speedily, however, the cat having caught and eaten many of them, the survivors remarked : " We believed he was praying to Buddha, but it is evident that his piety was only a cloak."

In Sanskrit legend we have the cat who feigns repentance, and who is called upon to act as judge in a dispute between a sparrow and a hare. He pretends to be deaf, and asks the two disputants to come nearer so that he may hear what they say ; on their approach, he seizes and devours both.

One more variation of this fable—namely, that from Thibet—shall be given : A cat that had been a great hunter when he was young, found that his powers lessened as years advanced, and therefore contrived the following stratagem in order to still obtain his prey. He took up his position near a mousehole, and pretending to do penance, appeared quietly devotional. This deceived the mice and won their confidence, but every day as they returned to their hole the cat slyly caught and ate the last of the troop. The chief mouse, noticing the diminishing number of his followers, became concerned,

and remembering the flourishing appearance of puss, suspected deceit. He set a watch and discovered the artifice, when he bitterly reproached the cat for the feigned penitence which had enabled him so treacherously to secure his prey.

In Hellenic fable the mice decide that in order always to know the whereabouts of puss, and thus be on their guard, a bell shall be hung round her neck, but no one amongst them will consent to undertake the formidable task of putting it there—hence the proverb, "Who will bell the cat?"

There is a Zulu nursery story in which occurs the incident of the presentation to a widowed Queen of the tail of a wild cat, the emblem of a Queen Dowager.

A negro fable* (which strongly resembles one of Æsop's) tells how a cat and a rat, after stealing some cheese, cannot agree about the division of the spoil, and ask the fox to be umpire; but he takes so much of it as the judge's share that the disputants expostulate. He loses his temper, and tells them to be thankful that he does not kill them both; after this he eats all the cheese.

There is a legend which tells of a race of Chinese cats with pendent ears, but it is said that no one can be found to verify the existence of this variety, and Père David, the French missionary, who knew China intimately, regarded the report as fabulous. However, in M. Paul Mégnin's "Notre Ami le Chat", a sketch of this animal is given.

In the folk-lore of Japan cats are mentioned with great awe, for they are credited with the power of assuming the human shape in order to bewitch mankind; on the other hand, it is set forth that they work for good as well as for evil ends. Many a legend comes to us from that country. In one, the two-tailed Vampire Cat destroys the customary beautiful heroine, and taking her form, preys on the hand-

* Charles C. Jones, jun., LL.D., "Negro Myths from the Georgia Coast."

some prince, but in time the cruel creature is exposed and destroyed by a faithful retainer. In another legend cats appear as loyal and devoted followers, and two of them, dying in the service of the lord's young daughter, have honourable burial in the neighbouring temple. A third narrative bears on the reputation puss has won as a destroyer of snakes. Two cats run away from their respective homes in order to be married; they get separated, and one of them is taken to the royal palace, where he kills the viper that is persecuting the Princess. Later, he and his former companion meet again and marry; they live happily in the palace for many years, and in the end they die together.

Near Bafa (the ancient city of Paphos), in the island of Cyprus, is the noted Cape of the Cats. In connection with it there is an interesting old tale which relates that in former times a monastery stood there, and the monks kept a certain number of cats for the purpose of making war on the serpents that infested the neighbourhood. These animals had been trained to repair to the abbey, when they heard the sound of a particular bell, in order to take their meal; afterwards they returned into the country and continued their hunting with persistence and skill. However, when the Turks conquered the island, the cats (strange to relate) were destroyed with the monastery.

It is said that cats are also employed at Paraguay to hunt the rattlesnakes which abound in the sandy soil. With instinctive skill puss strikes the reptile with the paw, and immediately throws herself on one side to avoid the counter-attack of the enemy. This is repeated until the serpent is dead.

But though generally enemies, the cat and the serpent may at times become friends, and apropos of this, it is narrated that in a certain monastery, where there was a pet cat, the monks, who were in the habit of fondling it, suddenly became ill, and, it was said, showed symptoms of poisoning. The poison theory was incomprehensible to the sufferers, until a labourer announced that he had seen the cat at

play with a serpent, when the physician concluded that the reptile had conveyed some of its poison to its playmate, and this was transferred to the monks when they handled their pet. The reason that puss was not harmed by the virus was that it was not communicated in anger, and the same argument would probably explain that, though the monks became infected, no serious consequences followed.

Puss appears (but only incidentally, and chiefly in association with millers) in some of the Turkish fairy-tales. In one entitled "The Ghost of the Spring and the Shrew"* there is a vivid description of a poor old cat, but in a curious manner it completely drops out of the story near its commencement. Another, "The Rose Beauty",† begins in the approved fairy-tale fashion, "Once upon a time", etc., and introduces a miller who has a black cat.

An anecdote (probably legendary) tells us that the wife of an Emperor of Turkey indulged her feline favourite by serving her with food on a gold plate at the imperial table.

In a Russian folk-tale, "The Ring with Twelve Screws",‡ the hero is saved by the good offices of his cat and dog; they also recover and restore to him his magic ring, the loss of which has occasioned his troubles. In another of these legends, "The Seven Simeons, Full Brothers",§ the Tsar has desired to wed a beautiful Princess, but his suit has been rejected. The Seven Simeons undertake to kidnap her, and, accompanied by their cat, travel to the far-off land where she dwells. The cat, an unknown animal in this remote country, attracts the attention of the Princess, who desires to buy it. The youngest brother replies that they will be very pleased to *present* the cat to the royal maiden, and by request he visits the palace daily to teach it to be friendly with her. On pretence of showing the Princess some beautiful brocades, he persuades her to accompany him to his ship,

* "Turkish Fairy-Tales", by Dr. I. Kunos. Translated by R. N. Bain.
† *Ibid.* ‡ J. Curtin's "Russian Myths and Folk-Tales." § *Ibid.*

and directly they are on board sets sail, carrying her away. After many adventures he brings her to the Tsar, by whom the brothers are munificently rewarded.

Amongst characteristic mediæval chronicles is the following legend of the cats of Beaugency (a town on the River Loire in France) : An architect employed in the construction of the bridge of Beaugency could not manage to complete it, for, as soon and as often as the last arch was built, it tumbled down. This had occurred three or four times, and the poor man, receiving no assistance from the saints he had invoked, in the end appealed to the Evil Spirit. The fiend undertook the work on condition that whoever first passed underneath the arch should belong to him. The architect consented, but, his end attained, he bethought himself of cheating the Devil by sending a cat as first traveller. Satan, enraged, tried to destroy the work, and at last, in giving a mighty kick, succeeded in disturbing one of the buttresses, which has ever since remained out of the perpendicular. However, unable to demolish the structure, and baulked of his human prey, he quitted the spot, carrying off the cat, whereupon the frightened animal tore her captor's hands and face in a horrible manner. Satan, the tale continues, could not endure the pain, and allowed the unfortunate prisoner to escape. Poor puss speedily took refuge at a place some distance away from Sologne. The locality was in consequence called Chaffin (Chat-fin), and since the time of this notable incident the inhabitants of Beaugency have borne the nickname of " Cats."

The cat was known to the ancient Celts, and appears in some of their legends as a transformed Princess. It was, however, as well as the dog and the cock, sacrificed at their religious festivals, and it is asserted that, within recent years in the Western Highlands, a cat was roasted alive as a means of raising the fiend for the purpose of discovering treasure.

The Irish narrative of two cats that fought so fiercely in a saw-pit

that, when the battle was over, there was nothing left but the tails, is a figurative relation of the discord that prevailed between the municipalities of Kilkenny and Irishtown. Until the end of the seventeenth century these towns were constantly at variance about their boundaries and other disputed claims. From this tale comes the saying, "to fight like Kilkenny cats", which of course signifies, to engage in a mutually destructive struggle.

The association of cats with witches is very ancient, and had its origin in pagan times. It is narrated, that when Galinthias* was metamorphosed into a cat, Hecate took pity on her and made her a priestess. It has already been mentioned that Diana (another form of Hecate) at one time found refuge in the feline form. Numberless legends are related of cats having spoken to human beings, who in return struck, kicked, or burned them; and, as the sequel, these same people are invariably said to have met men or women, generally the latter, during the next day who bore the marks of the injuries inflicted on the animals the previous night—a supposed incontrovertible proof of witchcraft and bedevilment. There is little doubt that in those days such evidence sufficed to cause the death—as supposed witches—of many innocent women, and the people of the Middle Ages who burnt "wise men", as well as hags and sorcerers, as a matter of course did not hesitate to burn cats; indeed, the latter three were classed together as alike in character.

As cats were supposed to be the companions of witches all over the world, the Highland hags of course followed the fashion, and the animals were credited with marvellous feats in the Scottish mountains. For example, an instance is recorded at the end of the sixteenth century concerning a cat that, after being christened, and having other ceremonies performed over her by witches (who may be supposed to have borne malice to gentle King Jamie), was conveyed into

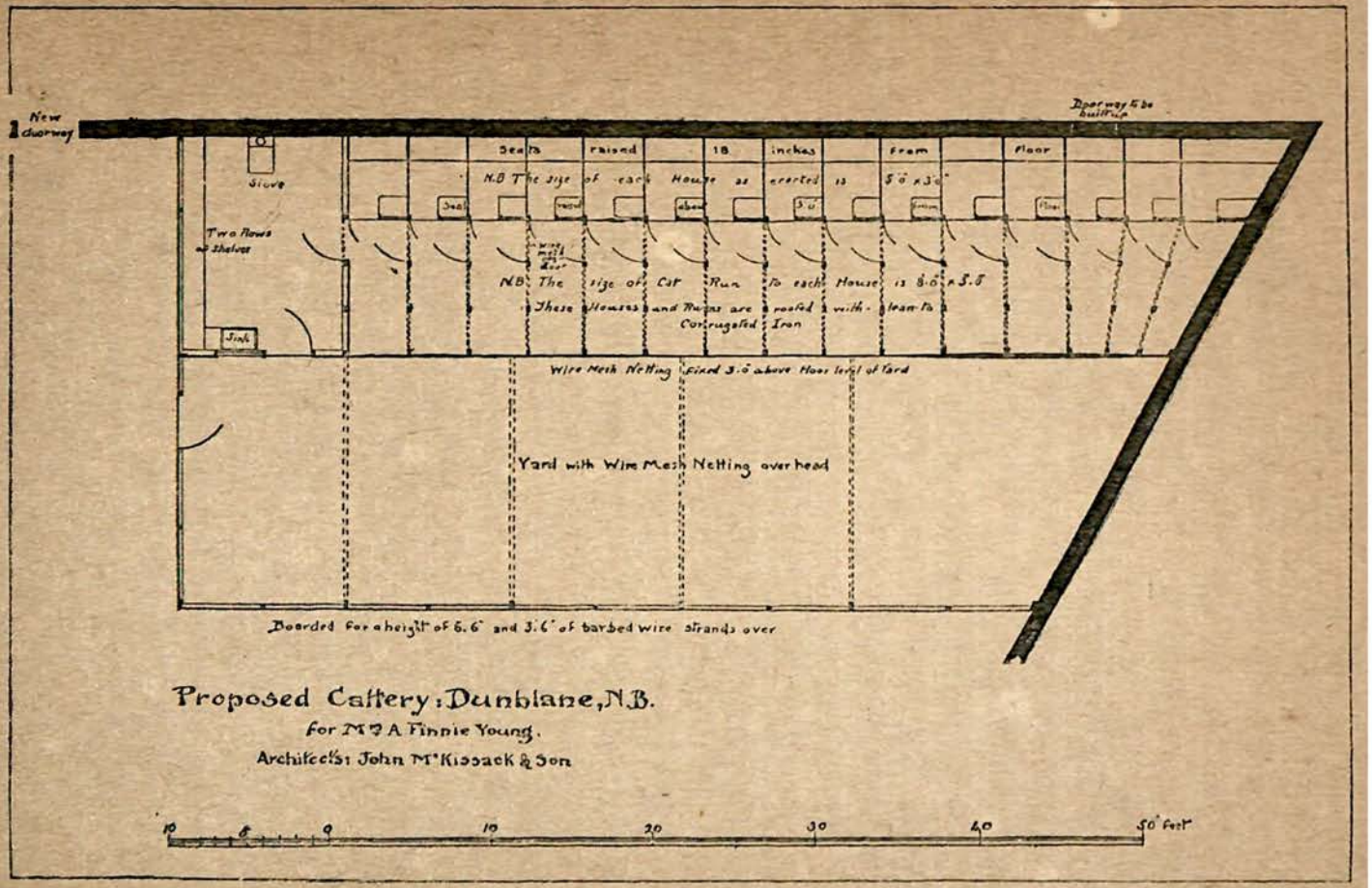
* *Vide* Ovid's Metamorphoses, IX. 306.

the middle of the ocean, and at last left before the town of Leith. The result was a great tempest, which not only caused the loss of a vessel in which were jewels and gifts for presentation to James's Queen, then about to visit the town, but also occasioned a contrary wind to arise, so that the ship which was bringing King James himself from Denmark was separated from the rest of the fleet. This is vouched for as not only strange, but true, and was acknowledged to be so by the King himself, who was without doubt a believer in witchcraft.

W. Grant Stewart, in his "Popular Superstitions and Festive Amusements of the Highlanders of Scotland", narrates a couple of anecdotes about witches and cats which are full of weird incident. The events in both occur on the same day, and the heroes are described as men who make unremitting warfare on the hags of their district. In the first tale a well-known laird takes a hunting party across to one of the isles, and after a day's successful sport they pass the night in the shooting-box. When it is time to return on the following day, the weather has become stormy and the sea turbulent. Most of the party wish to defer the passage, but the laird appeals to an old bent woman, who appears at the moment, as to her opinion of the prospect of a safe crossing home. She advises him to set sail, at the same time deriding for their cowardice those who would draw back. As soon as they have embarked, the tempest becomes more furious, and the host, in order to encourage his guests, keeps very cheerful, and himself takes the helm. At this moment he notices a large cat that is climbing the rigging; another follows, then others, and this continues until the shrouds, masts, and tackle are completely covered with them. He recognizes that they are demons, but does not feel afraid until a black and still larger cat appears on the masthead as commander. The laird orders an immediate attack on the army of disguised fiends, but it is of no avail; by their combined efforts the cats overturn the yacht, and all the passengers are

drowned, and thereby the witches are avenged. But these latter are unsuccessful in their second attempt at vengeance, which the other anecdote relates.

The incident which it describes takes place later in the same day. It is an attack on the life of a friend of this same laird. He is in his hunting-box, when an apparently poor, weather-beaten puss appears, and asks for shelter. She pretends to be afraid of two huge dogs that are lying by the fire, and begs their owner to chain them with a hair that she gives to him. This hair, however, looks so peculiar that he only feigns compliance. The witch-cat sits down by the hearth and soon begins to grow larger, and when the hunter remarks on this strange phenomenon, she replies that it is quite natural, and that, as her fur absorbs the heat, it expands. Suddenly she turns into a woman of his acquaintance, and (as he now discovers her to be) a witch. She tells him of his friend's death, and states that his hour has also come ; but when she attacks him, his dogs, whom she believes to be bound, spring on her, and a terrible fight ensues in which she mortally wounds the hounds, but not before they have fatally injured her. She is able, however, to transform herself into a raven and fly away, while they crawl to the hearth and die. The hunter, after sorrowfully burying his poor faithful guardians, goes home to his wife, who tells him that an acquaintance of theirs has suddenly been taken seriously ill ; she proves to be the witch who had attacked him in the afternoon, and who is of course dying from the effects of the struggle with his dogs. He goes to her house and exposes her wickedness, but in answer to her prayers for mercy the neighbours allow her to die in peace, instead of inflicting the customary penalties. However, she is evidently not to be at peace after death, as later in the night another neighbour, on his return from a journey, relates that he met a woman who was running at great speed, but halted a moment to inquire how long it would take her to reach the churchyard of


New doorway
Doorway to be built up
Seats raised 18 inches from floor
N.B The size of each House as erected is 5'0" x 3'0"
Stove
Two flows of Shelves
Sink
N.B The size of these Houses and Runs are Corrugated
Cat Run to each House is 8'0" x 3'0"
roofed with Iron
lean-to
Wire Mesh Netting fixed 3'0" above floor level of Yard
Yard with Wire Mesh Netting overhead
Boarded for a height of 6.6" and 3.6" of barbed wire strands over
Proposed Cattery: Dunblane, N.B.
for Mrs A Finnie Young.
Architects: John M'Kissack & Son
10 6 0 10 20 30 40 50 Feet

PLAN OF CATTERY.

From "Principles of Planning", by Percy L. Marks. By permission of Mr. B. T. Batsford, publisher.

Delarossie. When she heard that it was possible she might succeed in doing so before midnight, she hastened on. Farther on he met a huge black dog, and then a second, both running in the same direction as the dame. Still farther on he met a horseman, who inquired whether he had happened to see a woman, and if so, whether he had spoken to her. Shortly afterwards, when this same horseman, returning from the direction of the churchyard, again passed the traveller, the latter noticed that the female was lying across the saddle of the horse with both the dogs fastened on to her, and the rider remarked to him that he had overtaken the woman just as she was about to enter the churchyard. Thus she was too late to escape the Devil, who, however, was only getting his due.

Other legends inform us that puss occasionally gets the mastery over the Devil and other demons, and in doing so becomes a good spirit.

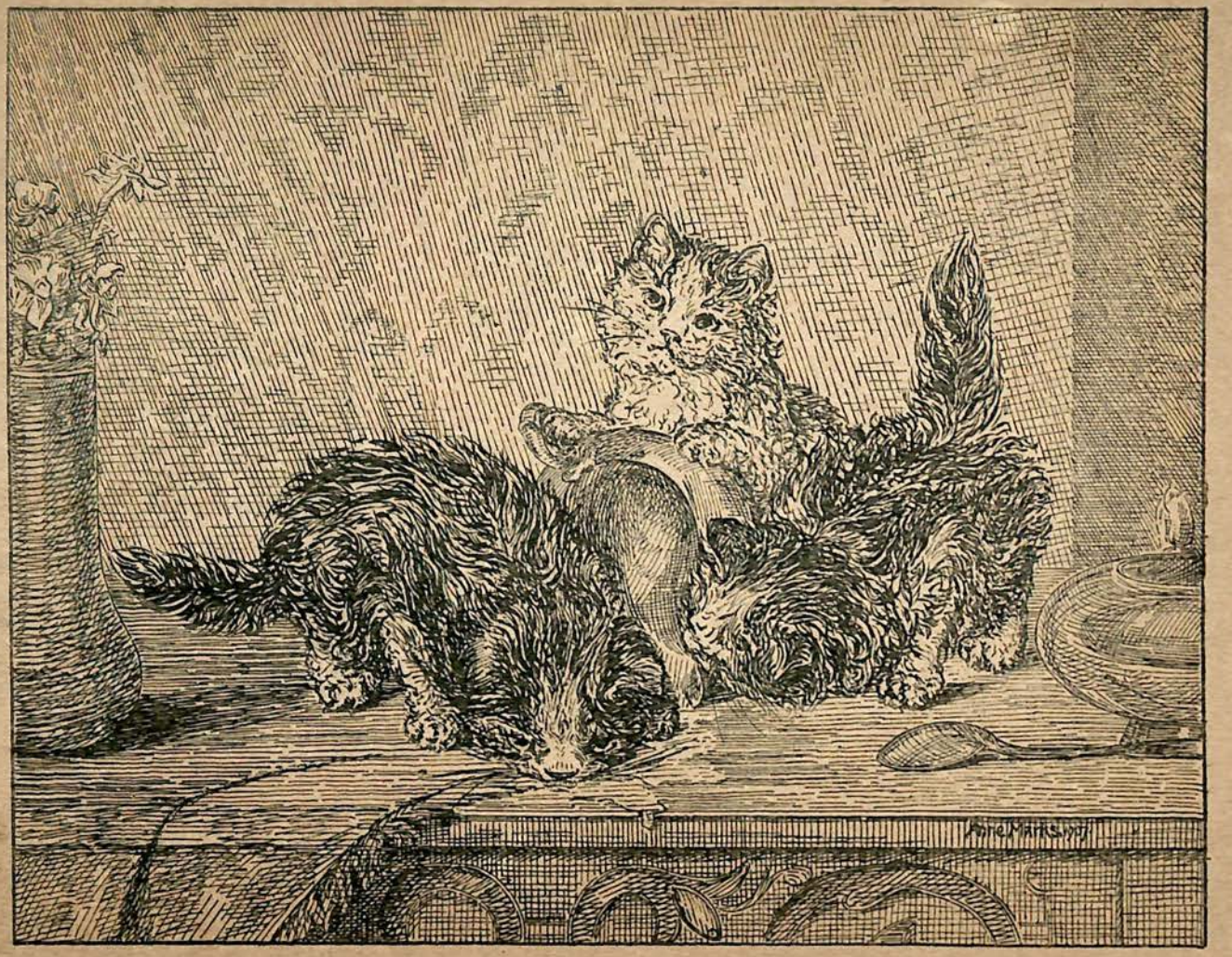
A fable, which has its origin in Tuscany, relates how a woman, with a large family of children and a total lack of means of supporting them, hears of the existence of a beautiful palace inhabited by a great many enchanted cats, who are very charitable to the poor. She seeks the palace and is admitted by a kitten. She performs various domestic duties, and thus shows that she is willing and obliging. At last she is presented to the cat-king, who is seated in state and is adorned with a crown. When he hears how helpful she has been, he orders her apron to be filled with golden coins as a reward. The woman has a wicked sister, who thinks that she also would like to obtain money from the same source, but instead of helping the cats she maltreats them. In return they scratch her badly, and she reaches home nearly dead with pain and terror. A similar theme is illustrated in one of our old fairy stories: the good and beautiful stepdaughter is rewarded for her kindness to an old woman—a disguised fairy—while the bad and ugly daughter, who is lazy and spiteful, and who shows

herself disdainful towards one whom she believes to be a beggar, meets in return with merited punishment.

In Germany the "nightmare", amongst other fantastic appearances, sometimes comes in the form of a cat, and a story is related of a man who was visited in this way. He stopped up the hole by which puss had entered the room, seized the animal, and nailed it to the ground by one of its paws. In the morning he found to his horror not puss, but a beautiful girl fastened to the floor with a nail through her hand. He married her, but when in later days he happened to uncover the hole, his wife immediately resumed the cat form, and escaped, never to return.

The following legend is told in the south of Lancashire: One evening a gentleman who was sitting quietly in his parlour was interrupted by the appearance of a cat which came down the chimney, called out, "Tell Dildrum Doldrum's dead", and immediately disappeared. Naturally startled, the gentleman told his wife (who presently came in) of the surprising incident, and (the legend continues) his own cat, who now entered, on hearing it, exclaimed: "Is Doldrum dead?" and vanished up the chimney, never to return. Numerous explanations of the incident were suggested, but the generally accepted one was that Doldrum had been monarch of Catland, and that Dildrum (the gentleman's cat), who was the next heir, had departed to claim his kingdom. A similar legend has its home in Northumberland.

THE CAT AND SUPERSTITION



"MISCHIEF."

CHAPTER III

THE CAT AND SUPERSTITION

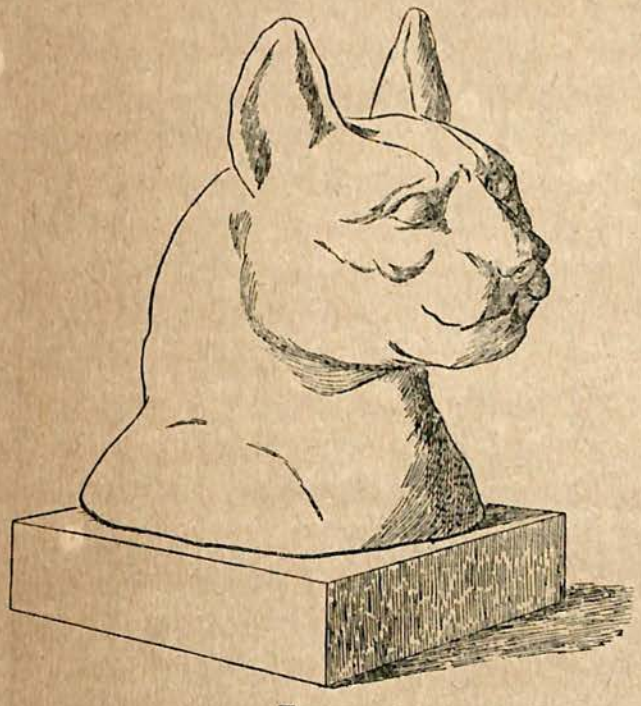


FIG. 12.

IN treating of superstitions associated with the cat, it may safely be asserted (in spite of the fact that some of them favour the animal) that no other four-footed creature has suffered so much from the cruelties incidental to this lamentable offspring of ignorance. In this country, in common with most others, superstition in regard to the animal was great and widespread during the Middle Ages, when many people believed that almost every movement of the cat had some significance. Some of these beliefs linger on even up to the present time, for the idea still survives that a black cat brings good luck, and that a sable stray should never be turned away from the house; it is also believed that, at the completion of a newly-built dwelling a stray should be brought in "for luck"—a black, not a white

puss, for the latter would be considered a harbinger of ill-fortune. Possibly we have here a variation of the superstition that on removal to a new house a cat or dog should be thrown in before anyone enters ; the idea is that whoever first crosses the threshold will be the first to die. In Ireland, however, it is considered most unlucky in removing to a new house to take the cat, and in consequence the animal is turned adrift.

By some authorities the sable puss is credited with miraculous healing powers. For instance, there are districts of this country in which a black cat is supposed to be, in regard to epilepsy, not merely an antidote, but a cure. In Cornwall again, sore eyes in children are said to be cured by the passing of the tail of a black cat nine times over the part affected. There are places (not necessarily in this country) where it is believed that blood from the tail of a cat will cure erysipelas.

In Germany it was at one time believed that the appearance of a black puss on the bed of an invalid presaged death, and one seen on a grave was regarded as a sign that the soul of the departed was in the power of the Devil. Another superstition averred that to dream of a black cat at Christmas foreboded some serious illness during the following year.

Black cats and skulls were the requisite accompaniments of the work of witchcraft ; the former were always to be found in the hovels of the sorceress and the wizard, while the steed of a witch was a tom-cat, a black one for choice. The apparatus required by the Evil One for the accomplishment of his enchantments included nails from the coffin of a person who had been executed, portions of a goat which had been a woman's pet, and the skull of a cat that had been fed on human flesh.

For a long time black cats were believed to be witches, because they were reported to be seen on the Sabbath in the company of goats

and toads. Often, merely as the companion of a witch, puss shared the fate of her mistress and perished in the flames. It was anciently asserted that hags were allowed to take the form of the cat nine times, and it was a common belief that the animal, when it reached the age of twenty, became a witch, and that a witch who lived to be one hundred turned again into a cat.

In Hungary a variation of this superstition was current to the effect that a cat generally became a witch between the ages of seven and twelve years.

In the Middle Ages it was believed that Satan appeared as a black cat, when he desired to torment or show his power over his victims; indeed, this was imagined to be his favourite disguise, and puss therefore became an object of dread. St. Dominique in his sermons represented the Devil in the guise of a cat.

In those days a kind of incantation was employed in which the cat was introduced, and by which the reciter of the charm was enabled to see demons. It may be that the connection of black cats with witchcraft was to a large extent due to the great quantity of electricity (more in black than in other cats) liberated from the coat by friction. Apropos of this supposition, it has been remarked that a cat, in moving quickly through an undergrowth of vegetation, produces an appearance of luminosity, and this being more noticeable in frosty weather, it was attributed to uncanny influence. It has also been observed that highly sensitive temperaments experience something akin to an electric shock through the slightest contact with the fur of a black cat; by the way, the Rev. Gilbert White, in "The Natural History of Selborne", relates that, during two intensely cold days, the fur of his parlour cat was so charged with electricity, that anyone properly insulated, who stroked the animal might have communicated the shock to a whole circle of people.

Black cats were associated with witches in many districts of

Southern Europe, and in Norwegian folk-lore ; in the latter they were also believed to inhabit ghost-haunted houses and to indulge in nocturnal revels. It is curious, notwithstanding these delusions, that among the Scandinavians and the people of Northern Europe puss should have been considered as an emblem of love; they used also to believe that cats were possessed of magical powers, and that it was

Fig. 13.

advisable to humour them. In Sicily it was thought that, if one of these sable cat-fiends lived with seven masters, the soul of the last of these was fated to accompany him on his return to Hades.

Although we are told that in China puss is considered to betoken ill-luck, and the display of sudden attachment to a family on the part of a feline stray is supposed to foreshadow poverty and distress, yet a clay likeness of a cat with a bob-tail like those seen in this country

is frequently placed on the apex of a roof as a protection against maleficent powers. At the same time the animal is suspected of being in league with the Evil One, and is credited with meteorological prescience. For these reasons it is propitiated, and, as in ancient Egypt, its likeness forms a favourite charm.

Amongst other superstitions prevalent in China is the notion that, shortly after the birth of a child, some hairs of cats and dogs should be suspended for eleven days outside the door of the bedroom where the mother is lying. This prevents the noise of the animals from frightening the baby.

In this country also, according to tradition, people sometimes reverence the ghost of a cat. Spiritual communication is established by hanging the cat, after which seven weeks of occasional fasting and prayer are observed in its honour. A bag is suspended by its side, and offerings are made to it. It is asserted that the ghost purloins the neighbours' property, and places the booty in the bag, and it is added, that as a consequence those who serve these cat-deities get rich very quickly. A high official in a certain district discovered that a considerable quantity of his store of rice had disappeared, and also learnt that behind his house dwelt a man who sacrificed to one of these cat-ghosts. He ordered that the [illegible]tee and the dead cat should be severely flogged, with the not[illegible]pected result that this particular animal ceased for the future to exercise its power. A similar tale appears in Northern legends.

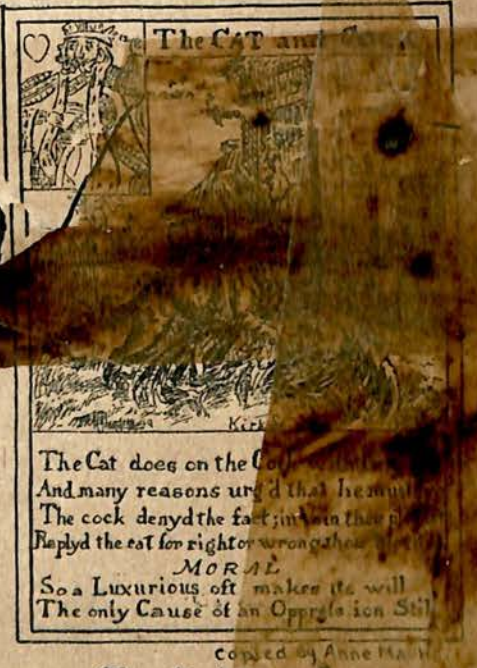
In consequence of her great powers of endurance puss is said to have nine lives, and perhaps that is a reason why at one time the poor creature was assailed and ill-treated so continually, for if one life was ended, were there not others in reserve? In Scotland it was believed that witches often assumed the feline form to facilitate the exercise of their evil influence over a family. On the other hand, in the West of Scotland that person was considered lucky to whom a male cat, on

Flemish (about 1775)

XIII. IL GATTO.
2.ª Div.
Fiere
3.ª Sez.
Carnivori
Il gatto ha molta rassomiglianza con la tigre, sebbene differiscano essenzialmente fra loro non tanto per l'indole, quanto per l'enorme diversità di statura. Il gatto è naturalmente selvatico, e sol'educazione lo ha reso domestico, conserva però in questo medesimo stato l'inclinazione all' indipendenza ed un naturale maligno, che egli nasconde sotto un apparente bontà e indifferenza. È dotato di somma accortezza, d'una proprietà singolare e d'una pazienza istancabile, si profitta dell'istinto che lo porta a distruggere i topi, per tenerne libere le nostre case. Ama i suoi comodi, e cerca sempre i luoghi più caldi e i più soffici mobili per riposarsi. Come in molte altre specie di fiere, il maschio divora talvolta i suo figli. La durata ordinaria della vita di questi animali è di nove in dodici anni.
Vi sono varie specie di gatti, fra i quali si distinguono in bellezza il gatto d'Angora di pelo lungo e morbido, e il gatto di Spagna moschettato di bianco, e nero.

Italian (1816)

English (about 1750)


The Cat
The Cat does on the
And many reasons urg'd that he must
The cock denyd the fact; in vain the
Replyd the cat for right or wrong she
MORAL
So a Luxurious oft makes ills will
The only Cause of an Oppressions Still

English (about 1780)

PLAYING-CARDS.

By permission of the Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing-Cards (Guildhall Library, London).

entering a dwelling, attached himself. In fact, a puss of any kind was always welcomed and petted. If, however, the animal became ill then (for it would have been considered unlucky for him to die inside the house) the custom was to remove poor pussy to an outhouse, put plenty of food there, and leave him alone either to recover or die. In Lancashire also it is believed to be unlucky for a cat to die in the house, but in this county the misfortune is prevented by the simple method of drowning the animal when it becomes ill. There is a peculiar superstition current on the Scottish Border according to which, if a cat or dog pass over a corpse, it is a presage of misfortune; in fact, in Scotland the animals are not allowed to approach a dead body, and to prevent the possibility of such approach the poor things are killed without compunction. In Devonshire, however, it is said that a cat will not remain in a house which contains a corpse, and stories are told of the disappearance of one on the death of an inmate, and its reappearance *after* the funeral.

To return to mediæval superstitions. Certain characteristics were assigned to the second-born of twins*—the power of detaching the spirit from the body, and an insatiable appetite. The former helped the latter in that the child was able to take the form of a cat, and so could more easily commit depredations for the purpose of obtaining the particular food desired. Parents of twins were very anxious that puss should not be ill-treated, lest their own child should be a sufferer. After the age of ten or twelve the child ceased to indulge in this practice, and its exercise could have been entirely prevented, if at the time of birth a decoction of onion broth and camel's milk had at once been administered to the infant. This superstition regarding twins existed among the Copts; it was of Egyptian origin, and probably an outcome of the belief in the transmigration of souls.

A very old saying, ascribed to an Athenian oracle, is that when puss

* Some say both twins had this power.

"combs herself it is a sign of rain, because, when she feels the moisture in the air, she smooths the fur to cover her body, and so suffer the inconvenience as little as possible"; on the other hand, it is said that "she opens her fur in the dry season that she may more easily derive benefit from any humidity in the atmosphere." The superstition lasted long and was greatly extended, so that for a cat to show more than the ordinary tendency to sit by the fire, and with the tail towards it, to scratch the legs of the table, to sneeze, to lick her feet, to trim the whiskers and the fur of the head, to wash with the paw behind the ears, or to stretch the paw beyond the crown of the head, were severally to be considered as signs of rainy weather; belief in the last named dates from the time when the priests of the goddess Pasht flourished. There is a Spanish saying that when the cat's fur looks bright it will be fine the next day.

It may be noticed here that sailors believe, when puss becomes unusually frolicsome, it portends tempestuous weather; the same result would follow should a cat unfortunately be drowned, and they think that if a black cat comes on board it foretells disaster. However, at Scarborough in former days the wives of sailors fancied that by keeping a black cat the safety of the husband while at sea was insured; consequently anyone else had a poor chance of possessing a sable puss, as she was nearly always stolen by one of these women.

The idea that the cat under certain circumstances may be a harbinger of evil is the reason that in many countries it is kept away from children's cradles. Another explanation of the objection that exists to the presence of a cat in a baby's cradle is to be found in the notion that the animal would inhale the infant's breath, and that death might ensue in consequence. It is, perhaps, needless to add that this impression has no real justification. On the other hand, it is current in Russo-Jewish folk-lore that, if a cat is put into a new cradle, it will be the means of driving away evil spirits from the infant.

The following are further interesting instances of superstition in connection with the cat, and are taken indiscriminately from the traditions of many countries. It some districts it was believed that all cats that wandered over the housetops in the month of February were witches, and therefore to be destroyed. The belief that "great evil is in store for him who harms or kills a cat" is evidently derived from the Egyptian appreciation of the animal, and, in addition, it was doubtless feared that hags would avenge any injury done to their familiars. When a cat washes herself, it is taken as a sign that a guest is coming; but if while so occupied puss looks at anyone, it portends that the unfortunate individual so regarded will be the recipient of a scolding. To keep a cat or dog from the wish to run away, it must be chased three times round the hearth, and afterwards be rubbed against the chimney-shaft; or, according to another mode, when the animal has been bought and brought home, it should be carried into the house tail foremost. It is believed that if a maiden is fond of cats she will have a sweet-tempered husband. Another superstition holds that if a kitten strays into a house in the morning it presages good luck, but if at night, the reverse, unless the kitten remains as a countercharm. If in a house where a person is ill the cats bite each other, it foretells death at an early date. In Tuscany, if a man wishes for death, it is opined that a cat—*i.e.*, the Devil in this form—approaches the bed.

FIG. 14.—CAT AND DOG.
From illuminated French MS. (British Museum, Additional MS. 29433, fol. 20).

A superstition that originated in Hungary and Tuscany avers that for a cat to be a clever thief, and therefore a good mouser, it must itself have been stolen. In Sicily there is a prevailing superstition to the effect that if a cat mews while the rosary is being counted for the welfare of outward-bound sailors, a tedious voyage will be the result.

The Cat in History, Legend, and Art

English folk-lore informs us that kittens born during the month of May should be drowned ; it was thought that if spared they would not catch rats or mice, and, in addition, that they would attract snakes and other reptiles into the house. A saying in Huntingdonshire runs "A May kitten makes a dirty cat." At one time it was a common belief that if puss were hungry she would eat coal, and in some districts the idea prevails to the present day. The tongue of the cat is rough, somewhat like a file, and it was supposed that if, by licking a person sufficiently, the animal drew blood, the taste caused it to become mad. A cat-call on the roof used to be considered as a token of death. If puss sneezed, it was said to presage "good luck" to the bride who was to be married on the following day ; but a sneeze was also accepted as an evil omen, which foretold rain, and also colds to every member of the family. It was advisable to look well after pussy's comforts, for it was believed that rain on the wedding-day showed that the cat had been starved, and in this manner the offended messenger of the goddess of love took revenge. Another superstition which connected the cat and weddings warned the credulous that the union would not be happy if, on the way to church, the company met either a hare, a dog, a cat, a lizard, or a serpent ; as some people had full belief in such portents, care was taken to prevent the occurrence of such an ominous encounter. There are instances recorded when brides have fainted through terror as a result of meeting under the circumstances either of the above-mentioned creatures.

A gipsy dislikes a sable cat in his dwelling, as he considers it uncanny, and a thing of the Devil ; he approves of a white cat, which he deems good, and like the ghost of a fair lady. However, it used to be believed that the bite of a white cat was more dangerous than that of a black one.

A formula for deliverance of a cat from the power of a witch was to make upon its skin an incision in the form of a cross.

The Cat in History, Legend, and Art

Puss has sometimes been accused of want of attachment to people. A suggested ground for this is that the animal eats mice, which are credited with being the source of forgetfulness, and the fear that this imperfection is contagious is responsible for the report that up to the present day in Russia Jewish boys are forbidden even to caress a cat. Apropos of this association of the Jew and the animal, we may ask whether it is reasonable to assume that the dearth of reference to the cat by early Hebrew writers may be accounted for by their probable dislike to it, consequent on its intimate relationship to the religious rites of the Egyptians.

Among the early religions, the doctrine of metempsychosis formed part of various creeds. It was thought that if, during this life, a man's good deeds exceeded his evil ones, at death the soul passed into another human body; but if his evil actions had been the more numerous, the soul in consequence migrated into a lower state—into the body of an animal—and it was according to the nature of the wrong-doing that the animal was selected into which the departed spirit entered. Thus the punishment of anyone for having forged charms was for the soul at death to pass into the body of a cat. The Cabbala, in its system of transmigration, taught that the soul of him who uttered the name of God (presumably with irreverence) passed into a cat. The Hindus, amongst others, believe in the doctrine, a modern instance of which is related by General Sir J. E. Gordon in his book, "A Varied Life." It appears that, owing to some curious coincidence noticed on the day of the death of a Governor of Bombay, the Hindu soldiers believed that his soul had passed into the body of one of the household cats, and as the individual animal could not be identified, it was determined that any cat that quitted the house between certain hours should be saluted in due military form. This observance continued to be honoured for many years by the Sepoys of various regiments.

SOME FACTS ABOUT THE CAT IN NATURAL HISTORY, AND AN ACCOUNT OF THE DIFFERENT VARIETIES

"What we should Weigh when in Health."

CHAPTER IV

SOME FACTS ABOUT THE CAT IN NATURAL HISTORY, AND AN ACCOUNT OF THE DIFFERENT VARIETIES

IT may be of interest to introduce a few words that deal with the etymology of the word "cat." Some have asserted that it is derived from the Aramaic word חתול (*chatoul*); others declare it to be of Roman origin, probably derived from the Latin *catus*. The name of the animal has in most languages a similarity of sound: Greek, κατται; Saracenic, *katt*; Arabic, *qitt*; Armenian, *kaz*; Turkish, *kèdi*; Old German, *chazza*; Modern German, *katze*; Celtic, *kâth*; Illyrian, *kozka*; Ancient Scandinavian, *kötts*; Italian, *gatta* and *gatto*; Spanish, *gata* and *gato*; French and Walloon, *chat*; Anglo-Saxon, *catt*, etc. Again, "cat" is said to be derived from the Latin *cattus*, through *cattare* = to see, and was thus named because it sees or watches in the dark.

In Aramaic the cat is also called שנר (*schanar*) and שונרא (*schunara*)*; in Greek, αἴλουρος (*ailouros*); in Arabic, *gittoun*† (a male cat); Illyrian, *furioz*, probably from the Persian or Arabic; in Latin, *feles*, *murilegus*, and *musio*—the latter because it catches mice.

Having noted the etymology of the word "cat", it may also be

* Derived from the Persian. This suggests that the domesticated cats of Syria and Europe come from Persia. One writer remarks that some etymologists give "Pers" as the origin of "Puss", and he considers it a proof that Persia is the native land of the animal.

† There has been doubt cast on the certainty that this word belongs properly to the Arabic tongue.

interesting to add a few words with reference to the nicknames, etc., which have been bestowed on the animal. In the sixteenth century the soubriquets of Tib (from Fr. *Thibert*) and Gib (from *Gilbert*=a male cat) were as common as Tom is nowadays. Other terms that were used in olden times for a Tom were "boar-cat" and "ram-cat", and the latter is still in use in the North of England and in Scotland. Another term is "carl-cat", from Old Saxon *carle* or *karle*=a male. Formerly the terms "doe-cat" and "wheen" (present day, queen) cat were used by the Saxons to signify a female puss. Some call Grimalkin the poetical name for a cat, though others use it to express an old (and especially the female) animal. In the Middle Ages a "clowder of cats" meant a company of them.

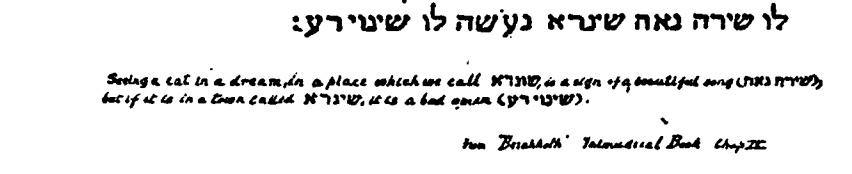

הרואה חתול בחלום באתרא דקרו ליה שונרא נעשית .
לו שירה נאה שיטרא נעשה לו שיטרע:
Seeing a cat in a dream, in a place which we call שונרא, is a sign of a beautiful song (שירה נאה),
but if it is in a town called שיטרא, it is a bad omen (שיטרע).
from Berakhoth' Talmudical Book Chap. IX.

FIG. 15.—QUOTATION FROM THE TALMUD.

Cats are very observant, and many anecdotes are related of them in this connection, amongst others the cleverness they exhibit when they open a door by raising the latch. They have evidently watched the process, and thus learned to imitate the motions, whenever it suits their own purposes to do so. There are also on record evidences of their perceptive powers as manifested by their use of knockers and bells, and occasionally their achievement of the still more remarkable feat of turning a key!

Harrison Weir, in the preface to his book "Our Cats," expresses the opinion that the self-reliant nature of the cat is undoubtedly the result of the lengthy period in which it suffered not only utter neglect but absolute cruelty. He believes that while neglect has

encouraged its powers of observation, ill-treatment is responsible for its timid but wild and cautious character. Harrison Weir also relates an anecdote of a cat that succeeded in opening a door by pulling it towards him when he found that to push it had no successful result. And he tells another of an incident that occurred at one of the Crystal Palace shows. He there observed a white cat furtively try to pull back the bolt or catch of the door of his pen. When conscious that he was watched, puss retired into a corner of his cage and pretended to be asleep, and only recommenced his efforts for freedom when he believed himself again unobserved. He had evidently noticed how the cage-door was fastened, and so recognized the way in which it could be opened.

Harrison Weir also remarks on the possibility that cats are able to reckon, and tells of one that lived in his house: fed daily when the cat's-meat man came his rounds, it used to watch and wait for him, but did not, however, attempt to do so on Sundays—*i.e.*, on every seventh day—because he recognized that at that particular interval of time the man would not call.

An anecdote is told (*Animal Intelligence*, G. J. Romanes) of a cat that had noticed the birds eat crumbs scattered for their benefit; so he removed some of them to a different spot to serve as a lure for the desired prey.

Dupont de Nemours, a naturalist of the eighteenth century, who endeavoured to study the language of animals, considered that pussy's vocabulary is more copious than that of the dog; also that the former, by reason of her claws and consequent power of climbing, gains ideas and experience impossible to the latter. Another writer, from the insight gained in this branch of observation, was satisfied that cats always utter a special sound for each particular object, and he also came to the conclusion that the "miow" signifies a call, and is not a note of endearment. The tones of the mewing vary considerably.

There is one for appeal or complaint, another to express delight and pleasure. Other sounds, such as hissing and spitting, express anger, etc.

Puss has had many admirers and supporters, but the following from a book written by Topsell, whose "Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes" is full of most interesting information, has passages which are not complimentary. In his article on cats he has uttered some very grave warnings. He believed that the breath and odour of the cat were very baneful to man, that they destroyed the lungs, and he therefore warns people against sleeping with puss on the bed. He tells an anecdote of a brotherhood of monks: "The brothers were so devoted to their feline pets that as a consequence they became infected, and within a short period none of them were able to 'say, read, pray, or sing.'" He relates this story in order to admonish people to beware of puss in the time of pestilence, as the animal is "not only apt to bring home venomous infection, but to poison a man with very looking upon him."

Fig. 16.

He considers that the flesh of a cat is poisoned in consequence of the nature of the vermin on which it feeds, that its brain is especially tainted, and causes the memory of the infected person to fail, while fits of frenzy may ensue. Should anyone suffer from the bite of a cat, he must feed well, and apply to the wound an ointment, of which the

prescription may be found in the book from which the above is taken. The author further remarks that, "if anyone should unfortunately swallow fur from the cat, suffocation might result, and cases have been known in which children getting fur into the mouth, it so strongly adhered to the throat that wens or king's-evil resulted." He quaintly ends these warnings thus: "To conclude this point, it appeareth that this is a dangerous beast, and that therefore, as for necessity, we are constrained to nourish it for the suppressing of small vermin, so with a wary and discreet eye we must avoid the harms, making more account of its use than of its person."

It is possible that in a wild cat the olfactory sense (being more in requisition) is more highly developed than in the domestic puss; but nevertheless the latter is known to be very fond of perfumes, and Topsell avers "that a remarkable fact is the fondness of the cat for the herb Valerian, which is said to resemble the eye of this animal, and the smell of it to be marvellously like that of itself; puss cannot resist it, and instantly digs it up if she comes upon it, even if it is hedged round with thorns." She is said to affect greatly the plant marum, and an old English rhyme which alludes to this penchant runs:

"If you set it,
The cats will eat it;
If you sow it,
The cats will know it."

Catmint is another plant favoured by puss; she much enjoys rolling in it. She has her dislikes also; for instance, if some wild rue is tied under the wing of a hen, and if some of it is placed in the window of a dovecote, puss will not attempt to hunt these birds, for she cannot endure the odour of this herb.

It used to be believed that the perfume of ointments caused the cat to become mad.

In a book devoted to the subject of cats it is necessary, for the

sake of completeness, that information should be added about the principal varieties of the animal, and the points that characterize the perfect type of each. Our domestic cat may be considered a descendant of the Egyptian variety (*Felis maniculata*), which was tawny or sandy-grey in colour, with tabby markings more or less indistinct ; of about the ordinary size, and with the ears large, and pointed somewhat in lynx-like form.

Fig. 17.

According to some authorities, the earliest record of the domesticated animal in England is found about the middle of the tenth century, though the wild species (*Felis catus*), the only kind indigenous to Great Britain, was very abundant before that date. The latter has, however, for a very long time been extinct in England. It is still found in the wilder parts of Scotland, but in Ireland it is unknown.

Two of the largest and best known varieties of the domestic cat are

the Persian and the English. The Persian is a long-furred animal, and to be of the perfect type should have a cobby build of body, and be low on the legs, which, especially in the males, should be firm and massive ; the paws should be large and broad, with tufts of fur between the toes. The neck ruff should be full ; the tail short, broad, and carried almost on a level with the body, though with a slight upward curve at the end. The head and face should be broad, with great width between the eyes, and also between the ears, whilst the latter must be small and well filled with tufts of fur. Nose short and broad, eyes round and large, cheeks well developed, are the correct characteristics. In colour there is great variety—the white, cream, chinchilla (or silver), black, smoke, and blue types are called self-coloured, and should in each case be of an even tone without markings. There are, besides, tortoiseshell, tortoiseshell and white, and the different varieties of tabby. The English cat, as already noted, is supposed to be an offshoot from the Egyptian stock. In this species the body should be cobby, and covered with short fur, which, when the animal is in good health, is glossy and sleek. The head should be round, broad from ear to ear, and the ears should be small and well set on. The nose should be short, and the eyes large. The colours are the same as those in the Persian variety, and there is still another point of similarity—namely, that the colour of the eye varies according to that of the cat. The tail is longer, and tapers somewhat towards the tip.

The Russian short-hair is characterized by a blue skin and short, close, and glossy fur of an even tone of blue ; the fur is sometimes slightly woolly in texture. In this breed the head, to be correct, should be rather pointed, the face long, and the ears large and without fur on the back of them ; the whiskers, eyelashes, and tip of the nose should be dark blue. The body is long, and somewhat lean. This is a handsome animal, and it may be observed that the Maltese cat of America resembles it.

The name of Cyprus applied to tabby cats in Norfolk and Suffolk is variously explained. Thus, some say that the domestic puss was introduced by merchants from the island of that name.

Again, others allege that these cats are so called from Cyprus cloth, a fabric woven from silk and hair, and with waved lines in the weaving to which the tabby markings correspond. A third explana-

Fig. 18.

tion is the following—namely, that since Cyprus signifies a reddish-yellow colour, the term may be used to indicate a red or a yellow tabby.

The Manx cat has already been mentioned; it should be without a vestige of tail. The combination of long hind-legs with a short back gives the animal a peculiar gait. The head should be round, and the

fur, though short, must be longer and softer than that of our English puss. Tailless cats are also found in Japan and the Crimea, and it may be of interest to mention that the Isle of Man possesses, in addition to the above variety, others with tails, both short and long, some measuring fully ten inches.

The Spanish black cat is valued for its swiftness, and also for the softness of the fur, which is much used as a trimming for dress purposes.

Cats of a peculiar variety are to be found at Avignon. It is alleged that if they become excited the eyes change colour.

Fig. 19.

In Siam, a special breed of cat was for a long time kept strictly within the royal palace. Now, however, it can be obtained, and though it is very delicate, and not easily reared in England, there are in this country several successful fanciers of the variety. This Siamese species is very unlike the Persian or English puss. The coat is close and harsh, similar to that of a close-haired dog; the ears large, and the body colour, when the animal is young, very pale fawn—in fact, almost white—whilst mask and feet are a very dark brown; the eyes are bright blue. The contrast of colour is fascinating, but unfortunately it becomes less pronounced as the animal gets older. Some writers aver that in their native country it is supposed that these cats receive the souls of their dead owners. There is a second variety of the Siamese cat; it is similar to that just described, except in colour, which is of a rich chocolate, the mask and feet being intensely deep in tone, the eyes usually of a lovely amber. The people

of the country have a superstition which makes them prefer to keep the two kinds; the first-named is typical of silver, and the latter of gold. The idea is that their owner will become wealthy.

The Abyssinian is a short-furred breed of a reddish-fawn colour. Each hair is ticked like that of a wild rabbit—hence its soubriquet of "bunny-cat." This variety, like the Russian, should have a somewhat longish face and large ears, and the tail must be short and thick.

There are many other varieties of the animal besides those already described. The Angora from Western Asia has long, fine, silky fur (which hangs in tufts), an admixture of woolliness in the texture, and a long body and tail. The frill must be long, the fur well developed in the ears and round the eyes, the head small, nose short, eyes large, and ears larger than those of the Persian variety. The eyes vary in tint, according to the colour of the coat, which is found of all the usual hues; those most prized, however, are the white, the blue, and the tortoiseshell.

The lengthened tuft of hair on the tip of a cat's ears is a distinguishing characteristic of the animal as found in India; but this peculiarity may also be observed with the cats of other countries.

The breed indigenous to Paraguay has short, scanty, shiny hair, lying close, especially on the tail. The animals are only about one-quarter the size of the ordinary domestic puss. Those of Mombasa, on the east coast of Africa, have short, stiff hair instead of fur.

Among less well-known breeds are the red-coloured cats found in Tobolsk and the twisted-tailed cats of Madagascar.

In Pegu, Siam, and Burmah the Malay cat is found, whose peculiarity consists in the tail being only half the usual length, and often curled into a knot that refuses to be straightened.

It is alleged that the cats imported into one particular part of

America have ceased to utter nocturnal cries—an excellent example that should be followed by the race all over the world.

The coon cat of America is said to be a cross between the cat and the raccoon. It is very handsome, and grows to somewhat larger size than the usual domestic variety.

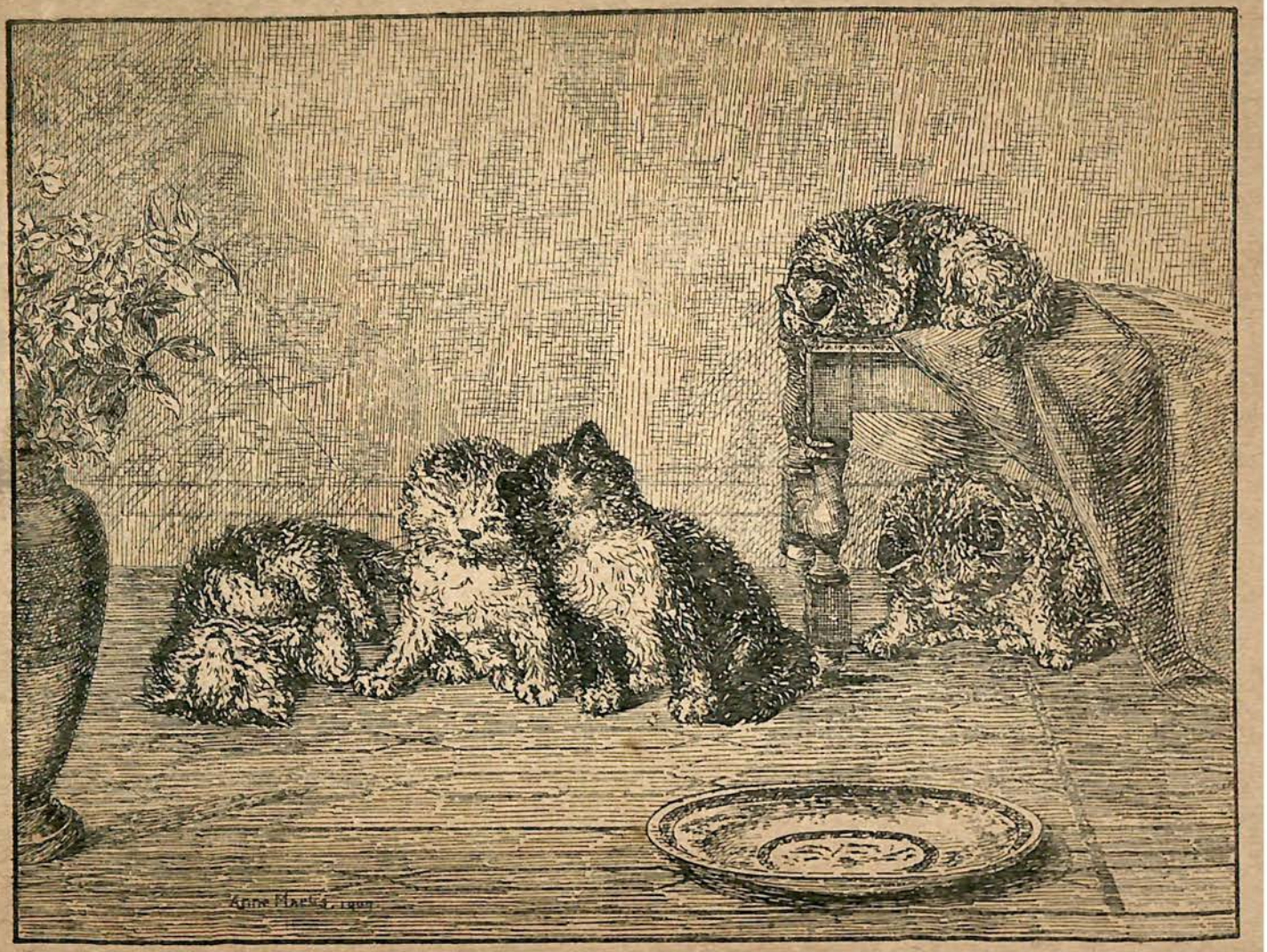
A special breed of cat is used in American (and possibly in other) cold-storage warehouses. The ordinary cat could not live in the temperature, but some robust individuals having at length become acclimatized in one such place, their offspring—strong, thick-furred animals—able to withstand the cold, are now domiciled in those warehouses, and the variety, sturdy and answering the purpose, continues to flourish. One of the peculiar features that differentiate them is the length of whiskers and eyebrows. By the way, it used to be believed that, if her whiskers were cut off, puss lost her courage; a reason for the belief may be found in the fact that the whiskers are organs of touch, and consequently of self-protection, and that without them puss would lack a principal means of recognizing "danger ahead."

In Madagascar and the West Indies, though originally the domestic cat was conspicuous by its absence, animals of a similar type were indigenous. As mentioned previously, it is the Australian region that may be regarded as the typical *catless* portion of the world, but the animal (as we all know) has been introduced since the continent has been colonized.

As a finale to this chapter, let it be urged in justice to the cat that it is not correct to assume that it is less intelligent than the dog. Without any attempt at comparison, let what the author has already called attention to be remembered—namely, that cats have very great intelligence. This is probably due to the considerable development of their senses of sight, hearing, and touch, rendered necessary by the exigencies of their domestic surroundings. They understand perfectly

what is said to them, but they also thoroughly understand their own wishes and the way to realize them, and they invariably succeed in compassing the end they have in view, unless prevented by resolution and patience equal to their own, aided by the superior resources at the command of a human opponent.

THE CAT IN ART



"A Siesta."

CHAPTER V

THE CAT IN ART

FIG. 20.

MANY instances of the association of the cat with works of art have necessarily been alluded to while tracing the history, legendary and otherwise, of the animal; but some, if only a few, special notices of the manner in which puss has been treated in pictorial, plastic, and other forms of art will, it is hoped, be found of sufficient interest to be collected in a separate chapter. It has been already noticed that the ancient Egyptians both painted and modelled the figure of the cat, mostly in association with their religious beliefs, and how until the Roman era very few traces of the animal have been discovered in the art of other ancient peoples.

The cat is introduced in hunting-scenes; in the British Museum is a wall-painting from a tomb at Thebes (belonging to the eighteenth or nineteenth Dynasty) which shows "A Scribe of the Royal Granaries Fowling" (Fig. 21), and in it a cat acts as retriever. Indeed, it is recorded that favourite cats sometimes attended the fowling expeditions in this capacity, though, according to some authorities, the animals so employed could not have been of the domestic variety. A frequent subject of these wall-paintings exhibits puss seated under the arm-chair of the mistress of the house, evidently a proof that at this

remote period she was already a domestic pet. One at Leyden, equally ancient, seems to confirm this opinion.*

The sketch (Fig. 22) on opposite page is from an antique model of the animal; the movable jaw shows much ingenuity in idea and execution—it works on a wire.

The Romans made occasional use of the cat in art. At the period of Rome's supremacy puss was a well-known animal, a favourite in royal and aristocratic households. In the Temple of Liberty at Rome, built by Tiberius Gracchus, the goddess was represented with sceptre and cap in either hand, and at her feet, a cat as the emblem of liberty.

Fig. 21.

Amongst other modes of using the effigy of the cat in art, the Romans frequently engraved it upon their shields and targets; as an instance, three companies of a regiment of their infantry had it on their shields. An example still extant of an inscription of the name of the owner on a seal reads: LVCCONIAE FELICVLAE; *Feliculæ* signifies "little cat." This seal is in a cabinet of medals in the Vatican Museum; and there may also be seen representations of the animal in marble and bronze.

In the British Museum are terra-cotta models of the cat, which

* One authority states that the domestication of this animal is as remote as the earliest civilization of man.

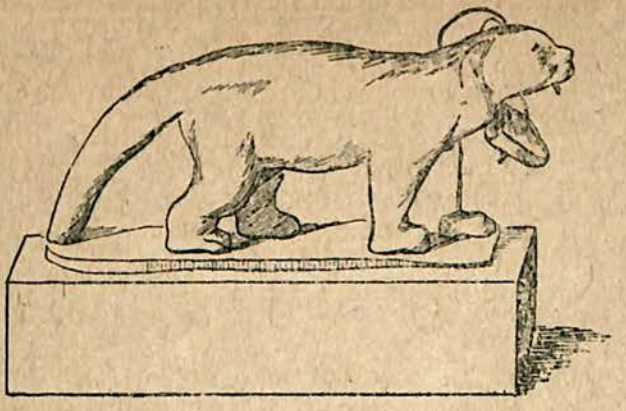


FIG. 22.

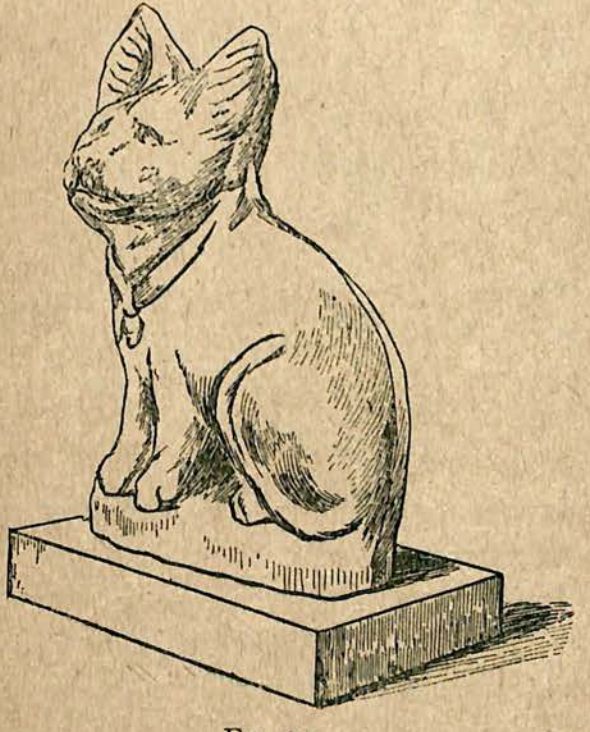


FIG. 23.

belong to the Roman period (Figs. 23 and 24); in one, puss is decorated with collar and other ornaments.

Besides the Romans, other nations depicted the cat as an emblem of Liberty.

In the museum at Naples there is a mosaic picture which represents a cat strangling a bird ; another example of this species of art was found at Pompeii, in which puss is devouring a bird. At the latter place was also discovered a fresco painting of the domestic variety of the animal, and in many of the old Italian pictures of sacred

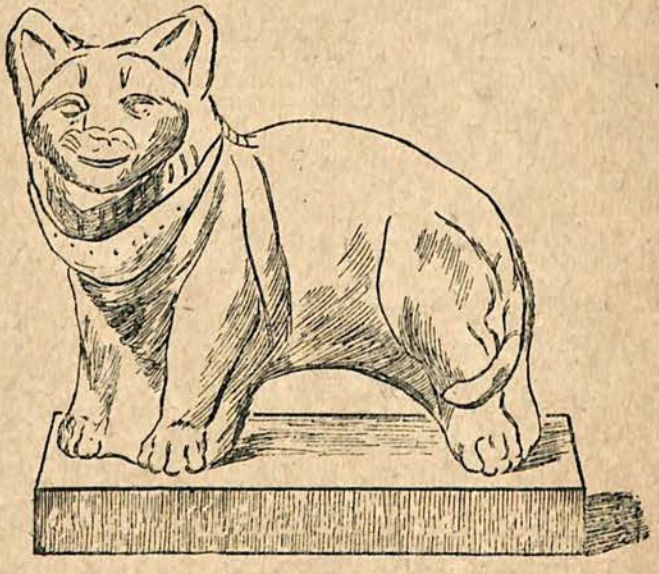


FIG. 24.

subjects the artists introduced cats. There are numerous other representations of puss to be seen in Italian collections.

In China the animal is modelled in ceramic ware, and conventionalized to form flower-vases and lamps. The Japanese paintings of the cat are very artistic, and some show much humour. A curiosity exists in a porcelain model of the animal, which is perfect in its workmanship. It is so constructed that a small lamp can be placed inside the head. At night this is lit, and when the flame illumines the pupils of the eyes the image is said to become so realistic in

its aspect that rats scamper away terrified at the sight of their feline enemy.

In a famous temple, near Kioto, may be seen a huge kakémono on which is painted the scene of the death of the Buddha (Sakya-Muni), who is shown prostrate under a tree. In a corner of this

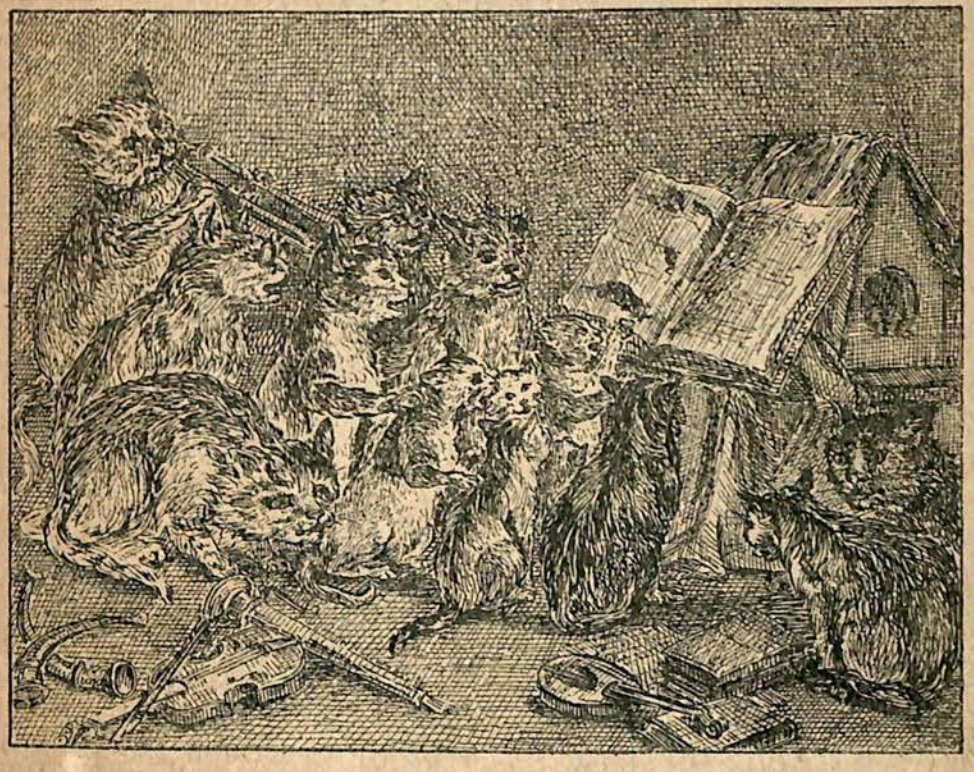


FIG. 25.—CONCERT DES CHATS.
From engraving by J. Couche, after the picture by P. Breughel I.
(Print Room, British Museum).

allegorical picture is a cat. The legend runs that the painting was completed, and that the artist had just put aside his brushes, and was about to give the kakémono into the hands of the priests who had commissioned it. At that moment, to his surprise, his favourite cat jumped on his shoulder, and in its own language plainly indicated that it wished to appear in the picture. Not able to resist his pet,

the artist complied, and in a few strokes of the brush puss was immortalized.

M. Champfleury, in his book about cats (which has been so well translated by Mrs. Cashel-Hoey), mentions a curious picture which appears to have been in his childhood's home. In this composition are assembled about a dozen cats of various kinds—aristocratic and the reverse. The "Solfège d'Italie" is shown open on the music-stand before which the pussies are congregated. Rats represent the notes in the music-book, their tails forming the quavers and

Fig. 26.

Fig. 27.

semiquavers. Facing the rest of the cats is one who wields the baton.

The artists Breughel and Teniers painted pictures of the same subject (see Fig. 25).

It may be mentioned in passing that rumour credits cats with having been trained to give concerts; such performances, however, could only be mechanical, and the results anything but agreeable. In one instance a monkey acted as conductor, and the cats mewed in response to his baton.

It is said that in many of the peasants' cabins in Russia may be seen a coloured print which depicts an old legend of the country. Though really modern, it gives the impression of being an antique

production by reason of the Egyptian and Byzantine features that are introduced into it. The subject illustrated is the funeral of a cat; the obsequies are carried out in a very impressive manner.

From very early times cats have made a considerable figure in heraldry, and have appeared in different countries as armorial bearings on the shields of various families* (Fig. 26). Some family names signify "cat"—namely, the Katzen family, whose device is "A cat holding a mouse" (Fig. 27). The Keats, in Devonshire, bear on argent three cats in pale, sable. In Scotland we find the clan Chattan, or the "wild cat", and their chief is styled "Mohr au Chat" (the great wild cat).

The firm of Sessa, printers of Venice in the sixteenth century, had as their mark a cat surrounded by a scroll. It represented the old idea that the animal was a symbol of independence, because it was said that printing was a sign of enlightenment with subsequent enfranchisement. It would appear from Fig. 28 that a somewhat similar mark was used by at least one other firm of printers in Venice. The book in the British Museum, from which this figure is taken, bears the name of the firm "Fratres De Sabio", and the date 1546.

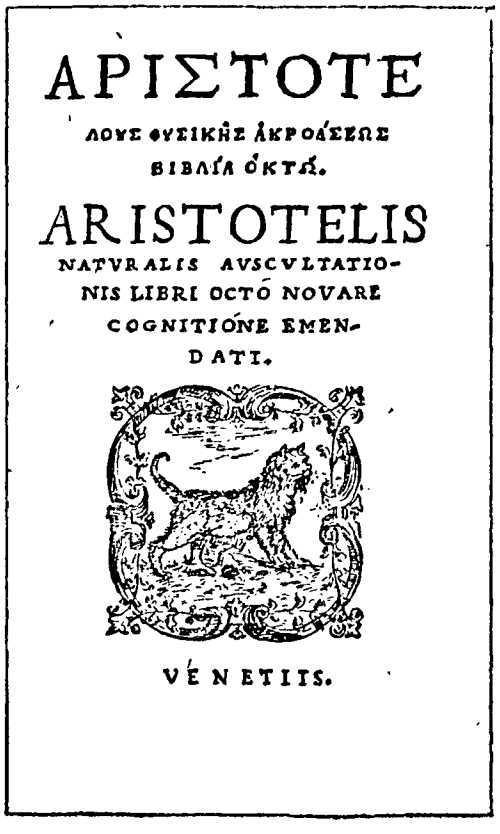
Cheese modelled in the shape of a cat was formerly sold in Cheshire, and gave rise to the old saying with which we are all familiar, "He grins like a Cheshire cat";† and this, by the way, has been amusingly treated by Tenniel in the illustrations to "Alice in Wonderland." This reminiscence leads naturally to the query why (if we bear in mind the record of artistic representations of puss from such early times) are there so few modern artists whose speciality is

* In coat armour the cat should appear full-face, showing both eyes and the two ears.

† Apropos, a curious meaning has been attached to this phrase. It is said that Cheshire is a County Palatine, and that the cats are so much amused with the notion that they laugh.

the study and portrayal of the cat?* A probable reason for this may be that the cat is such an exceptionally lively model.

Much interest is to be found in the signs and emblems over shops and taverns in which the effigy of puss figures—*e.g.*, "The Cat and Mutton", Hackney, which gives name to "The Cat and Mutton


ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤΕ

ΛΟΥΣ ΦΥΣΙΚΗΣ ΑΚΡΟΑΣΕΩΣ
ΒΙΒΛΙΑ ΟΚΤΩ.

ARISTOTELIS
NATVRALIS AVSCVLTATIO-
NIS LIBRI OCTO NOVARE
COGNITIONE EMEN-
DATI.

VENETIIS.

FIG. 28.

Fields." "La Chatte Fidèle", in Farringdon, Devon, is said (as the name would imply) to be so called in memory of a faithful cat, though possibly the title is intended to indicate that the game of "cat", or

* Amongst the few may be mentioned Gottfried Mind, the Swiss, whose cat-sketches were so good that he was called "The Cat Raphael", Mme. Henriette Ronner, M. Eugène Lambert, and the Japanese artist Ho-Kou-Sai.

"trap-ball", and a fiddle to provide music for dancing were to be had within. "Cat and Fiddle" came to be a favourite sign; it appeared first on a tavern in Piccadilly. The origin of the name is uncertain; some think it a corruption of Catherine la Fidèle, wife of Peter the Great, the Tsar of Russia; others say of Caton le Fidèle,

FIG. 29.

the Governor of Calais. The board over an inn of this name at Norwich displayed a cat performing on a fiddle and surrounded by dancing mice.

In Ireland is found the "Cat and Bagpipes", which instrument, in place of the fiddle, is the national favourite.

"Whittington and his Cat" was once a popular sign, and was to

be seen as late as the commencement of the seventeenth century. "The Cat in Cage" and "The Cat in Basket" were used at the frost fair on the Thames in the early part of the eighteenth century, as well as in festive gatherings of a later date; in some instances a live puss was placed outside the booths. The origin of these two signs is unknown.

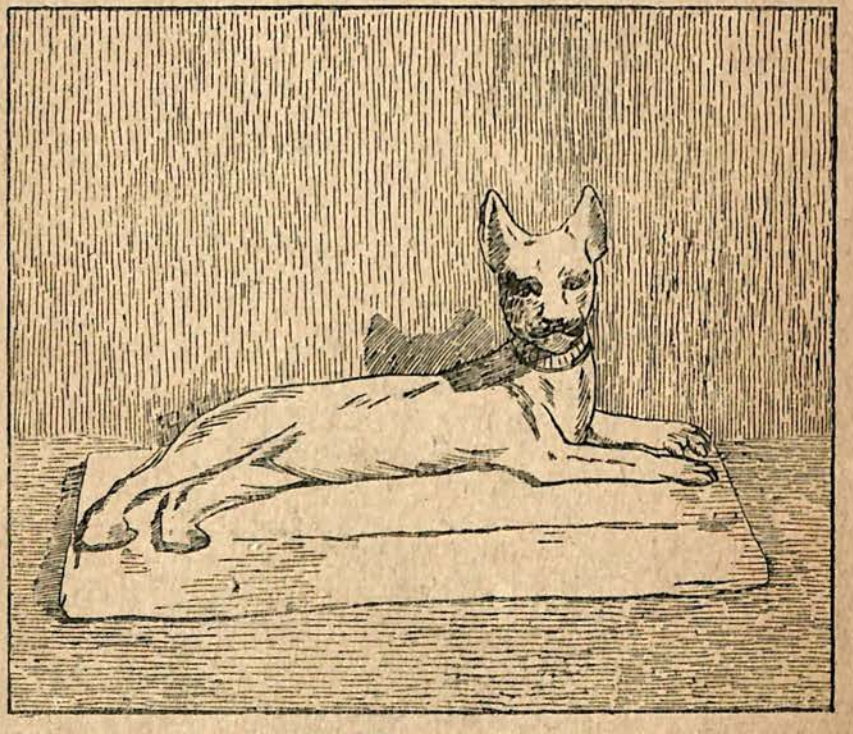


Fig. 30.

In France the following examples are to be found: "La Maison du Chat qui pelote", and also a very interesting one over a shop at the corner of two streets in the Lombards' quarter in Paris. There are two black cats, one looking into either street; the name is "Au Chat Noir."

Paradis de Moncrif, in his book "Les Chats", tells us that in Paris is the combined tomb and monument (Fig. 29) erected over the

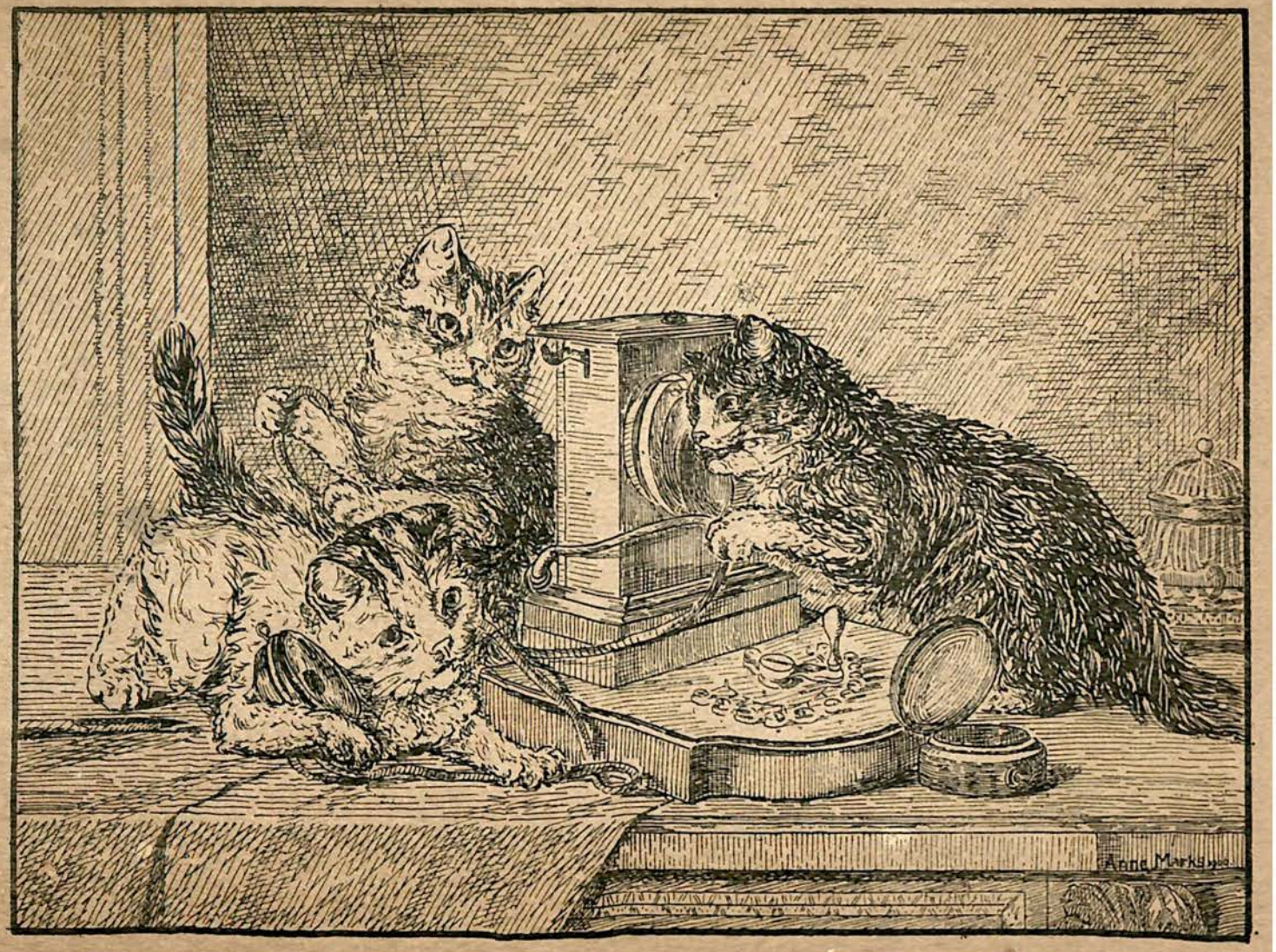
favourite cat of Madame de Lesdiguières. On the top of it is the model of poor puss in a reclining attitude, and beneath is the following inscription :

" Ci git une Chatte jolie.
Sa maîtresse, qui n'aime rien,
L'aima jusques à la folie,
Pourquoi le dire ? on le voit bien."*

In the museum at Troyes there is a fifteenth-century capital which represents a cat, but it is said to be a hideous effigy of the animal.

* There are a few graves of cats, ornamented with headstones, in the Dogs' Cemetery in Hyde Park, London.

THE CAT IN ANECDOTE, POETRY, PROVERB, AND NURSERY RHYME



"ARE YOU THERE?"

CHAPTER VI

THE CAT IN ANECDOTE, POETRY, PROVERB, AND NURSERY RHYME

AMONGST the illustrious poets who have written in commendation of the cat may be mentioned Shakespeare, Goldsmith, Cowper, Wordsworth, Gay, and Swinburne, of our English bards, and many of the versifiers of other countries. The cat also figures in the proverbs of many lands; a few of the more notable examples of both kinds of literature are given below, and are purposely set down without any attempt at method.

A very early poem on the cat is found in a translation from the Arabic of Ibn Alalif Alnaharwany of Bagdad, a poet of the ninth century.

In a dialogue that was written by the Greek poet, Theocritus, one of the speakers, in scolding a lazy slave, compares her to a cat "that likes to sleep soft."

It would, however, take up too much space to quote largely from the poets; besides, doubtless most readers are acquainted with their works. But we shall give the two following extracts—one from Cowper and the other from Gay—because the first-named addresses his cat as if she were human, and thus endorses what has been insisted on in this book—namely, the wonderful intelligence of puss; and the latter passage, because it repeats in verse some of the points already noticed.

The following are Cowper's verses on his cat :

"A Poet's cat, sedate and grave
As poet well could wish to have,
Was much addicted to inquire
For nooks to which she might retire,
And where, secure as mouse in chink,
She might repose or sit and think.
I know not where she caught the trick;
Nature perhaps herself has cast her
In such a mould *philosophique*,
Or else she learned it of her master.
* * * * *
Forth skipp'd the cat, not now replete
As erst with airy self-conceit;
Nor in her own fond apprehension
A theme for all the world's attention;
* * * * *

MORAL.

"Beware of too sublime a sense
Of your own worth and consequence;
The man who dreams himself so great,
And his importance of such weight,
That all around, in all that's done,
Must move and act for him alone,
Will learn in school of tribulation
The folly of his expectation."

In Gay's fable of the old woman and her cats one of them reproaches her in these lines :

"'Tis infamy to serve a hag—
Cats are thought Imps, your Broom a Nag;
And Boys against our Lives combine,
Because 'tis said we Cats have nine."

An old saying which bears on this idea is "Care killed the cat"—that is to say, care will kill anyone, even though he had, like the proverbial cat, nine lives. Many well-known writers have immortalized their feline favourites ; Tasso wrote a sonnet to his, and Alfred de Musset

did likewise. Paul de Koch in his novels adds many a description of his various pets.

It is said that Petrarch loved his cat devotedly, and that when she died he had her embalmed. Shakespeare often refers to puss in his plays; Shylock remarks that there are "Some that are mad if they behold a cat"; and again, he is made to say: "There is no firm reason to be rendered why he [that is, anyone] cannot abide a harmless, necessary cat." Antipathy to the animal, however, seems to be inherent in some natures, and is not unknown among historical characters. Apropos of this, Topsell says: "There is in some men a natural dislike and abhorring of cats, their natures being so composed that not only when they see them, but being near them and unseen, and hid of purpose, they fall into passions, fretting, sweating, pulling off their hats, and trembling fearfully, as I have known many in Germany; the reason whereof is because the constellation which threateneth their bodies, which is peculiar to every man, worketh by the presence and offence of these creatures, and therefore they have cried out to take away the cats."

An amusing anecdote in this connection is told of a man who felt suddenly quite faint and damp when passing under a signboard. He glanced up, and immediately recognized the cause of his unexpected indisposition in a painted cat on the signboard above his head.

An instance of antipathy to the cat, communicated by a correspondent, appears amongst the papers in the eighth volume of the *Spectator*, which is so amusingly narrated that it is here quoted verbatim. It runs as follows:

"A story that relates to myself may be thought not uninteresting, especially when I assure you that it is literally true. I had long made love to a lady in the possession of whom I am now the happiest of mankind, whose hand I should have gained with much difficulty without the assistance of a cat. You must know, then, that my most

dangerous rival had so strong an aversion to this species that he infallibly swooned away at the sight of that harmless creature. My friend Mrs. Lucy, her maid, having a greater respect for me and my purse than she had for my rival, always took care to pin the tail of a cat under the gown of her mistress whenever she knew of his coming, which had such an effect that every time he entered the room he looked more like one of the figures in Mrs. Salmon's Waxwork than a desirable lover. In short, he grew sick of her company, which the young lady taking notice of (who no more knew why than he did), she sent me a challenge to meet her in Lincoln's Inn Chapel, which I joyfully accepted, and have (amongst other pleasures) the satisfaction of being praised by her for my stratagem."

To return to Shakespearian references to the animal. In "Macbeth" the witches commence their incantation with the remark: "Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd." In the same play Lady Macbeth exclaims: "Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would', like the poor cat i' the adage." The adage alluded to is found in Heywood's proverbs, 1566: "The cat would eat fish, and would not wet her feet." Falstaff, in "King Henry IV.", remarks: "I am as melancholy as a gib [male] cat." This is a Scotch saying, gib-cat signifying an old, lonely, melancholy puss. Benedick, in "Much Ado about Nothing", says: "If I do [*i.e.*, ever fall in love], hang me in a bottle like a cat, and shoot at me."* Many other instances occur in Shakespeare's plays.

Amongst the more characteristic proverbs, the following are set down at random: "When all candels be out, all cats be grey."

"A cat in gloves catches no mice."

"The shadows of Night dance when the moon is absent"—an Eastern form of "When the cat's away the mice will play", which affords a typical example of the poetry of expression inherent in Oriental writings.

* The game of "Cat in Bottel" has already been described.

GEISHA CARESSING CAT.

"When cat and mice agree, the farmer has no chance."

"What's bred in the bone will never out of the flesh", a popular proverb which is echoed in a Zulu nursery tale of the cat that falls in love with a Prince, and is changed by Venus into a woman. On one occasion, however, she shows that she still retains her feline nature by springing after a mouse.

"The noisy cat catches no mice."

"The scalded cat dreads cold water."

"Who will not feed the cats
Must feed the mice and rats."

It has been suggested that the old saying, "A cat may look at a King", may possibly be connected with the ancient nursery rhyme, "Pussy-cat, pussy-cat, where have you been?" etc. The Scotch say "A halfpenny cat may look at a king", which is even more democratic in its meaning.

The common idea that puss dislikes wetting her paws has given rise to the saying, "Cats love not to wet their feet."

The well-known phrase, "There is not room to swing a cat", comes from Smollett's "Humphrey Clinker"; and Mark Twain, who quotes the proverb apropos of a ship's cabin, adds "at any rate, not with safety to the cat."

There is a Japanese-Buddhist proverb: "Even in a cat the Buddha nature exists." This, however, is a little inconsistent when we recollect the following legend:—Two creatures alone failed to weep when the prophet died, the mamushi (a poisonous viper) and the cat.

An Italian saying, "There was not even a cat there", indicates an empty house, and is derived from the old myth: "That when the Sun enters into the night, he finds in the starry heavens an enchanted palace, in which there is not a single living soul to be found."

"Honest is the cat when the meat is out of reach" is a sad

reflection on pussy's morality, while "The cat broke the china" is an instance of her position as the popular scapegoat.

"To let the cat out of the bag" signifies to disclose a guarded secret.

The following are found in the Manx language in Harrison's "Mona Miscellany." Though possibly met with all the world over, yet the first of the two is peculiarly applicable to the Isle of Man, for "They live like cat and dog" would seem to be derived from the legend of the origin of the Manx cat. In "What can you get of the cat but the skin?" the proverb refers to the fact that the fur was worn as trimming for dresses, and in most countries was the only part of the animal that was used.

"To turn cat in pan." The explanation given of this phrase is "a complete turnover in party, in politics, or in religion", for the sake of being in the ascendant; synonymous with the Vicar of Bray—a turncoat.

The adage, "The cat and the weasel have made a match", is used about those who have been at enmity and have become reconciled.

The saying, "Throw up a cat which way you will, it always falls on its feet", is supposed to denote a person who has such forethought that whatever may happen he is always on his guard. The cat itself bears the character of being watchful and swift, and of adapting itself to circumstances. The following proverb illustrates this charming adaptability: "'We are all well placed', said the cat, when she was seated on the bacon."

A couple of sayings referring to black cats are—

"Whenever the cat of the house is black,
The lasses o' lovers will have no lack."

and—

"Kiss the black cat,
An' 'twill make ye fat;
Kiss the white ane,
'Twill make ye lean."

Both of these bear out the idea of a black cat bringing good luck.

There is a fable of a monkey who used "the cat's paw" to take his chestnuts out of the fire, hence the phrase "to be made a cat's-paw of."

A few of the many old nursery rhymes about puss are appended. We have already noticed the concluding portion of the Passover Service, and we may add that the poem in question is believed to have been originally written in Chaldaic, and that it is the prototype of the modern stories of which "The House that Jack built" and "The Pig that won't go over the Stile" (in both of which puss figures) are specimens.

The idea of the witch and her cat appears in the rhymes which commence:

> "There was an old woman who rode on a broom,
> And she took her old cat behind for a groom."

Ultimately Tom returns by sliding down the rainbow, and leaves his mistress to visit the Man in the Moon.

Another old nursery favourite is—

> "Hey! diddle, diddle,
> The cat and the fiddle,
> The cow jumped over the moon;
> The little dog laughed
> To see the sport,
> While the dish ran away with the spoon."

And even better is the Quaker's version of "Hey! diddle, diddle", from which it appears that members of the Society of Friends will not depart from strict truth even in a nursery rhyme, and have accordingly rewritten it.

One or two more old favourites may be referred to: the lines previously mentioned—

> "'Pussy-cat, pussy-cat, where have you been?'
> 'Oh, I've been to London, seeing the Queen!'
> 'Pussy-cat, pussy-cat, what did you there?'
> 'I frightened a little mouse under the chair'"—

and "The Three Little Kittens that lost their Mittens."

The Cat in History, Legend, and Art

In the foregoing pages we have traced the fortunes—good and bad—of puss from her appearance in the days of Noah down to very recent times, and in conclusion we express our hopes that she will never be deposed from her present comfortable position.

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